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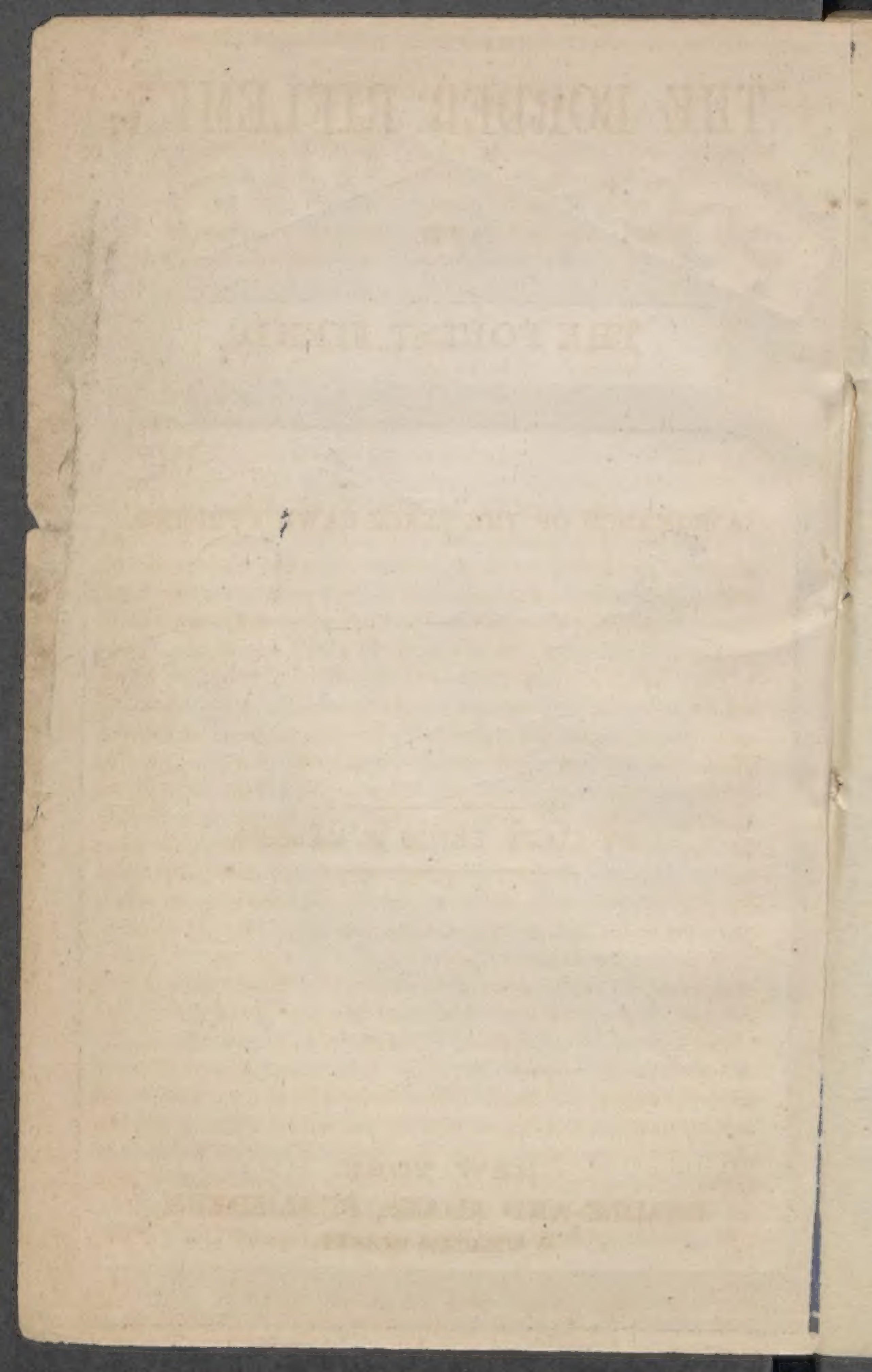
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The Border Riflemen. 18





THE BORDER RIFLEMEN;

OR,

THE FOREST FIEND.

A ROMANCE OF THE BLACK-HAWK UPRIISING.

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THE BORDER RIFLEMEN;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE BORDER SUITOR—COONEY JOE.

THE sun was going down behind the western hills in a flood of yellow light, and a river dimpled on under the slanting rays, great fish leaping now and then from the placid surface, and the trees along the bank casting fantastic shadows into its depths. In a sheltered nook, near a spot where a little creek joined the river, a settler had built a cabin, which the hand of woman had beautified and adorned as only the hand of woman can. Bright flowers bloomed on each side of the rustic doorway and an English ivy vine clung to the walls and was rapidly spreading its delicate tendrils over the whole front. The cabin faced the stream, and behind it the hand of industry had cleared many acres which now showed heavy growths of cereals and roots, carefully cultivated. It was a silvan spot, and one upon which the eye of the artist would linger long and pleasantly.

The door opened suddenly, and a young girl holding a water-pail in her hand came out with a free, careless step, singing a merry song. She was plainly dressed, and yet there was an air of native grace about her every movement which plainly showed that she had not always lived amid such wild surroundings. She was beautiful—not the vapid beauty of cities, but that of perfect health, and a free life. Her form was untrammeled by the fashions which cramp and deform the beautiful women of our day, and her face, a little browned by exposure to the sun, glowed—

"With sunny beauty and rustic health."

Maud Müller—Whittier's Maud—was not more beautiful than this frontier damsel. Not only was her face cut in a perfect mold, but her eyes sparkled with life and vivacity, and her sunny hair, unconfined, hung about her shoulders in beautiful profusion.

She left the river, turned down the creek, entered a little grove half a mile from the house, passed through it, and looked across the open field beyond.

"Father," she cried, "are you there?"

No answer was returned, save the echo of her musical voice, and she looked about her in evident surprise.

"Where can he have gone?" she murmured. "Father!"

As the words left her lips there was a slight rustle in the bushes by her side, and a man came out and stood beside her. He was still young, but his strikingly handsome face bore the marks of a life of dissipation and riot. He was quite tall, nearly six feet in his moccasins, with a face which showed unmistakable signs of Indian blood, though somewhat remote, and a wandering black eye, full of passion. He was dressed in hunting costume, and held in one hand a long rifle, and two small protuberances in the breast of his hunting-coat showed where his pistols lay concealed.

"I thought I should meet you here, Sadie," he said, quietly. "You don't look very glad to see me."

"You know what I think of you, William Jackwood," she replied, turning quickly away. "How dare you to come here, after what has happened?"

He laughed a low, bitter, chilling laugh, which did not indicate enjoyment, and his black eyes seemed to emit sparks of fire.

"I would not refer to our last meeting, if I were you, Sadie," he said, evidently controlling himself by a violent effort. "I was half crazy with liquor that night or I would not have said what I did. See here; give me a chance to make this right with you and I'll do it. I want to be a friend to you—I do, upon my soul. I'll ask your pardon on my knees, if you'll forgive, and promise not to lay it up against me."

"I forgive you," she said, with a cold, passionless glance, "but you must not come here any more, for all that. My

father has told me not to have any more to say to you, and I shall obey him."

The man stood grinding the butt of his rifle into the soft earth, and fighting a powerful battle to keep down his heart. The girl no longer looked at him but took up the pail and was moving on.

"Wait a moment," he said, hoarsely. "I can't part from you like this, Sadie. You don't know what you are doing or what will happen if you don't use me more kindly. By — I beg your pardon, but I am half mad—I can't stand it. Do you know that I worship the ground you tread for your sake, and would give my life at any moment if it would be of service to you?"

"You must not speak to me in that way, Mr. Jackwood," she said, in a more gentle tone. "I am truly sorry for you if you speak the truth, but I can not listen to you. Aside from the fact that my father does not like you, I have my own inclinations to consult, and I do not and never can love you."

"Then you love some one else," he cried savagely. "All right; marry him if you dare, but of this be assured—the moment you stand up before the minister with *any* man, if it were my own brother, I will kill you both where you stand. Do you hear me?—I will kill you both."

"Do you dare to threaten me in that way, Will Jackwood? Oh, if my father were here, he would teach you to insult his daughter in that way. Do you think to frighten *me* by idle threats? Since you force me to say it, know that the sight of your dark face is and always has been odious to me, and that I will never speak to you again except upon compulsion under any circumstances."

He caught her by the wrist with his disengaged hand and held her firmly, when she dropped the pail and struck him full in the face with her open hand. He uttered a cry like that of an angry tiger, and letting go his hold upon the gun caught her about the waist with his strong right arm. Powerless in his grasp, she struggled with all her strength and screamed for help. The call was not made in vain, for a quick step was heard, and a heavy body crashed through the bushes, and Sadie screamed again.

"Comin', by the mortal, comin'!" roared a hoarse voice.
"Oh, yes."

Will Jackwood released her instantly and caught up his gun, just as a short, thick-set, powerfully-built man darted from the bushes and stood beside them. He wore the fringed hunting-shirt and beaded moccasins of the scout and hunter, and his long, flax-colored hair was crowned by a greasy coon-skin cap in the last stages of dissolution. The face was a marvel of native ugliness, but in spite of that he was greeted with a cry of joy from Sadie.

"Cooney Joe is hyar," he yelled. "What is the matter now?"

"I have been insulted, Joe," cried Sadie, panting for breath.

"By that yer p'ison critter, I'll bet. Now look out, Black Will, acause I'm a-goin' to give yer the durndest lickin' you ever got sence yer mammy took ye over her knee. Hyar's fur ye."

Before Black Will could bring his rifle to a level the stout hunter dashed in and his heart was beating against the broad breast of the man known as Jackwood. In a moment more they were locked in a fierce grapple, fighting in true western style, without the slightest idea of the rules of the ring. In a stand-off fight, the long arms and powerful build of Black Will would have given him a decided advantage, but in the close grapple Cooney Joe was more than his equal, and loosening one hand by a violent effort he struck his antagonist such a blow in the face that his teeth seemed to rattle in his jaws, and he staggered. Throwing himself forward with a victorious war-whoop, Cooney Joe brought him to the ground, and the next moment was kneeling on his breast with his long, brown fingers fastened on his throat in a decidedly uncomfortable way.

"Yah-h-h—hip! Got ye that time, my sweet infant! The old coon kin climb a tree yit. Say the word, Miss Westcott, an' by the big meat pie I'll choke the life clean out of his pesky karkidge."

"Let him go for the present, Joe," she said. "He has been punished sufficiently, and it will teach him that I am not friendless."

"Oh, pshaw! don't let him git off that way. Take off his belt and let me larrup hin with it till he *howls*."

"No, no; don't strike him again. Take away his weapons and let him go."

"Hold on," said Black Will hoarsely. "Don't touch the pistols and I promise to go away at once, and not make a move for revenge to-day."

"That's fair," said Joe, rising. "I never knowed the critter to break a fair promise, Miss Sadie, and you kin trust him."

Cooney Joe stood up and Black Will slowly arose, with an expression of fearful malice upon his dark face, slowly brushing the dust from his clothing without speaking a word. Cooney Joe had taken up his rifle and stood leaning upon it, a grin of enjoyment stretching his naturally wide mouth.

"Curious how things come round, ain't it? I've wanted a lick at you fur nigh onto five year an' never got a chance till now; does me good, this does."

"Of course you know I'll have your life for it, Joe Bent," said Black Will, in a quiet tone.

"Sartin, sartin, if ye kin git it," replied Cooney Joe. "But don't forgit that ef I see yer hand go anigh a pistil in a strange company I'll try to shoot first. 'Member that, don't ye."

"I'll try to remember, Joe," was the reply. "Now, Miss Wescott, I will say to you what I intended to say when this meddling fool broke in upon us. You shall never live to be the wife of another man. If I can not have you, no one else shall, I swear by every thing I hold true."

"P'isen critter, ain't you, Will?" said Cooney Joe, regarding him with a look of benign interest, as a great natural curiosity. "I'll be individually an' collectively cussed ef you ain't a nice picter to go a-talkin' about marryin' a gal like Miss Sadie. Why, bu'st my buttons, ef I don't think she'd ruther have me!"

"I would indeed," replied Sadie.

"Who asked you to speak, Joe Bent?" said Black Will, savagely. "Keep your distance and live in safety for twenty-four hours, but after that I will take your life, no matter where I meet you."

"You rare 'round the awfulest kind, don't ye," replied Joe, with a merry look. "Dash my bacon ef you ain't a study fur a painter. I've see'd chaps in the theater at St. Louis that rared round the stage jest as you do now, but somehow they allus got special hail kolumbia in the end. Now git; I don't want to say any thing more *but* git."

Black Will quietly tightened his belt, brought his rifle to a "right shoulder shift," and was off at a long, slinging pace which carried him rapidly across the field.

"Thar goes a pizen critter, Miss Sadie," muttered Cooney Joe. "Now I reckon he meant jest what he said when he told me that he'd hev my life, but I've took a good many chances, though he'll hev my ha'r sartin ef I don't shoot first when we meet."

"I am sorry to have brought you into danger, Joe," said the girl.

"Sorry—danger—git out! D'ye think I keer fur *that*, little gal? Why, make it the wust ye kin, the chances ar' I git a shot afore he does, an' ef I *miss*, then it's my own fault. Whar's yer daddy?"

"I came out to find him and bring him some drink. I thought he was at work in this field."

"He orter be keerful," said Joe Bent, uneasily, "'cause the Injins are gitting r'iled up awful, and thar's no tellin' when they may break out. Let's try an' find him."

"There he is now," cried Sadie.

As she spoke, a middle-aged man, with a hoe across his shoulder, appeared at the other side of the woods and came rapidly toward them. As he came near he shouted cheerily to Joe Bent, who seemed very glad to see him, and they shook hands heartily. Mr. Wescott had the same air of gentility which showed itself in his daughter, but, like her, had adapted himself to his present surroundings, and looked the picture of a genuine western farmer. In stature he was almost a giant.

Sadie rapidly recounted her meeting with Black Will, and all that had passed between them, and the face of Mr. Wescott darkened, while his hand closed convulsively upon the handle of his hoe.

"It is a lucky thing for the black-hearted scoundrel that I was not by, Sadie," he said, "or it would have gone hard with him. What brings you up this way, Joe?"

"I sort o' got a hint to git off the hunting grounds from that pernicious red devil, Napope, who is sp'ilin' fur mischief. Ar' ye good friends with the Injins, 'square?'"

"Certainly; I never wronged one of them in my life."

"Not that it matters much ef they once rise," continued Joe, "because then they won't hav any friends in the white race. I've my doubts of that Black Will, anyhow. Two weeks ago I saw him in the Injin village, an' him an' that cussid Napope was ez thick ez flies in sp'iled bacon."

"What is the trouble with the Indians?" said Wescott, uneasily.

"Them cussid agents rob them like thieves," replied Joe Bent. "Ef Black-Hawk would only ketch an' burn them, I don't believe our sellers would kick much, they act so fearful mean. Do you know that I think the village the best place fur Miss Sadie, 'bout this time in the year?"

"I'll talk to you by-and-by," said Wescott, with a quick glance at his daughter's observant face. "Come to the house and get something to eat."

They quickened their steps and reached the cabin, and while Sadie set about preparing a meal, they sat outside and smoked their pipes, talking in low, eager tones. Sadie could see that their conversation was very important, and, woman-like, felt piqued that they kept it secret from her, and hurried her preparations. In a few moments the homely meal was smoking on the board, and they sat down, enjoying their food with keen relish; but the two men dropped their conversation, or rather, changed it to indifferent subjects, much to the disgust of Sadie. Just as they were about to rise from the table, she gave utterance to a cry of surprise and ran to the door, and a moment after appeared, leading an Indian girl by the hand.

CHAPTER II.

MINNEOBA'S WARNING.

It was a woman of the Sac nation, but bearing unmistakable signs of white blood. Her form might almost have vied with that of Sadie, and her dark skin glowed with perfect health. Her hair was unlike that of any pure Indian girl, slightly waving, and with a luster upon it never seen in

the pure Indian. Her dress was of the richest description that was worn by the women of the tribe, and her head was crowned by a coronet of eagle-feathers, which bespoke the daughter of a chief. Dainty feet, small hands and delicate features distinguished the maid from the majority of her race, and all together, two more noble specimens of native grace rarely trod the same floor.

"By the piper that played while the king danced, if it ain't Minneoba, the pride of the Sac nation," cried Cooney Joe. "Say, gal, what ye doin' 'round yer?"

"Minneoba has traveled a long path, and she is weary," replied the Indian girl, faintly. "Let the Wild Rose give her food and drink."

Sadie, who was much taken by the rare beauty of the forest maid, seated her at once at the table and placed food before her. She passed over the few dainties which the table afforded, and ate the most simple food, and her appetite was soon gratified. Joe whispered aside with Mr. Wescott.

"I tell you that the gal is the favorite daughter of Black-Hawk," he whispered, "an' she's got some good reason fur bein' hyar. But don't hurry her, for I know the breed and she's obstinit, durned obstinit, when she hez a mind to, though she's a good gal, too."

In the mean time the Indian girl was chatting merrily with her new friend, and her musical laugh rung through the cabin.

"Whisper to Sadie to git her confidence, Mr. Wescott," muttered the hunter. "She kin do it. The gal is open-hearted as the day, and ef she means friendship she *means it*."

Wescott called Sadie aside and spoke to her in a low, hurried tone, and nodding intelligently, the white girl returned to the side of the Indian girl, and soon after the two rose and went out of the cabin, strolling down by the river side. Minneoba had her fan in her hand, more from habit than anything else, and they walked along the green banks, talking earnestly.

"Minneoba is the daughter of Black-Hawk," said the maiden, in answer to a question, "and she loves her father well. The heart of the old man is very sad, for he sees the white

men forcing the Indian step by step out of the land their fathers gave them. Look down and tell me what you see."

Close to the bank of the stream not far away a succession of low mounds of different sizes showed where the ancient grave-yard of a tribe had been. Not far from this a white village was seen, the farms of the settlers encroaching upon the graves.

"When we bury the bodies of those we love, daughter of the white man, it is not pleasant to think that the feet of the strangers tread upon the graves. The Indians are rough and rude, but they too love the graves of their fathers, and it makes them sad to think that the plow of the white man will disturb the loved remains."

"It is very sad, but I have heard that Keokuk sold this land to our people."

"Keokuk has done wickedly," cried the girl, excitedly. "It is a false Indian who treads upon his father's grave, or allows the white man to do it. A Sac despises the man who is so base."

"What will the Indians do?"

"What they will do is not for an Indian girl to say; their hearts are very sore, but they would be friends with the white men, if the white men will let them. But fire-water and bad men will make trouble in the land. Tell the people of the village that it would be better for them to give up the Sac town and build for themselves upon another place."

In order to understand the words of Minneoba fully, it will be necessary to set down the history of the events which finally drove Black-Hawk to desperation.

By the treaty entered into by the United States upon one side and the Sacs and Foxes, Sioux, Omahas, Iowas and Ottos upon the other, headed by Keokuk, or the Watchful Fox, the land of these tribes was sold to the United States. In this bargain and sale Black-Hawk took no part, but in spite of that the Indian agents insisted that he should leave his village, which without his consent had been sold to the whites, and build another upon the west bank of the Mississippi.

No race love their native land better than the Indian, and Black-Hawk was of the pure blood. He cursed the traitor

who had sold their country, but vowed that he would not leave his village until compelled to do so by force. Every little disturbance between wandering white men and the tribes, every slight affair of whatever kind was magnified and turned against the Sac chief. Yet he only sought to do what was right, and prevailed upon Keokuk, who had made the treaty, to go to the white agents, with whom it had been made, and offer them in the name of the Sacs the lead mines, the most valuable property of the Indians, if they might be permitted to retain their village. The Watchful Fox, satisfied that he had sold that which was not his own, agreed to go, and ask for Black-Hawk the little land on which he village stood, including the grave-yard of the tribe. It was refused.

It was the custom of the western tribes at this date to go out in winter in a body and have a great hunt. Black-Hawk went away at the head of his tribe with secret misgivings, and the village was left unguarded. This was the winter of 1830, and when the Indians came back from their hunt they found their village in the possession of the whites, who had taken advantage of their absence to take possession. The river was yet full of floating ice, and it was impossible for the Indians to move, but they sent word to the invaders that before corn-planting they would drive them out of the village, no matter at what cost to themselves.

The whites were alarmed, for they felt their inability to oppose the tribe with their present number. A deputation was sent to the chiefs, proposing that they should occupy and plant the land together. The Indians, always generous in the disposal of land, agreed to the proposal, but upon arriving they found that the whites had seized and planted the best of the land.

The peaceful village became one of the most disorderly upon the frontier. With the whites came in their vices, and the Indians, naturally weak, began to feel their effects. The sale of liquor was commenced, and by its aid the whites gradually robbed the Indians of all that they could call their own.

The chief saw with alarm what must be the result, when they received orders to cross no more to the east bank of the river. The result of such an order may be readily under-

stood, rousing all the fierce passions of the Indians, and in this state matters stood at the time when Minneoba visited the cabin of Mr. Wescott.

The Indians were now nearly all upon the west bank of the river, the chiefs preferring this to longer intercourse with the white men. These simple men were no match for their wily antagonists, and had too rapidly imbibed their vices. Black-Hawk was an Indian, but he had a heart to feel for the woes of his people, and he saw that only by force of arms could he hope to succeed in wresting his country from the hand of the invader.

"Is it possible that my father's land belongs to the Indians?" said Sadie. "He paid for it honestly, and would not willingly wrong any man."

"The Wild Rose speaks truly. Her father has a great heart, but he holds the land which belongs to Black-Hawk."

"Then he will pay for it again, sooner than wrong a chief of the Sacs."

"Black-Hawk will not sell his lands to a white man. Let the words of Minneoba sound in the ears of Wild Rose. This is no place for her to dwell. Let her get a swift horse and fly away until the tempest has passed, for a dark cloud hangs over her father's house and threatens her."

"I have done no wrong; why should I flee?"

"My sister, the evil will come to the just and the unjust, for Black-Hawk will have his land again. Do not ask me to tell you more, for a Sac maiden can not betray her father but take those you love and fly."

While yet speaking, the rapid beat of hoofs could be heard, and two men rounded a point of woods and approached them. At a glance Sadie recognized Black Will and a desperate rascal who was more than suspected of selling arms to the Indians, a great offense upon the frontier. This man's name was Richard Garrett, and he was hated and feared all along the border.

"Ha, look!" cried Minneoba. "Yonder comes a bad white man, who has spoken evil words in the ears of Black-Hawk. What does he here?"

"Let us hurry away," whispered Sadie. "He is my enemy, and I fear to meet him now."

The two girls darted into the bushes, but not quickly enough to evade the eyes of the two men, who at once urged their horses and overtook the flying girls.

"Ha, my dear," said Black Will, placing himself in front of Sadie, and effectually barring her further flight. "I did not expect to meet you so soon."

"Do not stop me, Will Jackwood," cried Sadie. "You have been punished once to-day for your insolence. Joe Bent is not far away."

"He is safe from me for this day, for he has my word," replied Black Will. "But, when we meet again, one or the other goes down."

"Threats do not hurt the absent," was the quiet reply. "Let me pass at once."

"Not so fast. I shall not have a better opportunity than this, and must entreat you to come with me."

Unconsciously, in their walk, the girls had come some distance from the house, and at that quiet hour few persons were abroad. Sadie understood the object of Black Will. It was to seize and carry her away for the purpose of forcing her to become his wife. He sprung out of the saddle, and menacing her with instant death if she cried out, hurried toward her, when a new and unexpected obstacle stood in his path. Minneoba had been almost unnoticed by the two scoundrels, and seeing that Dick Garrett was employed in holding the horses, the brave girl suddenly strung her bow, and fitting an arrow hastily, sprung in between Black Will and his intended victim, and he recoiled with a cry of rage, as the bright point of the arrow glittered in the light.

"Minneoba, by all the devils! Out of my path, girl, or a worse thing may come to you."

But Minneoba did not move, her bright eyes fixed upon the form of the would-be abductor in a way which he did not like.

"Sadie is the friend of the Sac girl," she said, quietly. "You shall not touch her while I live."

"You don't know what you are doing, mad girl. What will your father say when he knows that you have aimed an arrow at my breast—*mine*, of all white men in the territory?"

"It would be better for Black-Hawk if you had never seen

him," replied the girl. "Take your horse and go, for I will spare your life if you do not touch the Wild Rose; touch her, and you are dead."

Black Will was a brave man, but he knew well the deadly skill of the Indian girl, and had seen it proved a hundred times in sportive encounters in the Indian village. Though full of rage, he dared not advance.

"But listen to me, Minneoba," he said. "This girl is to be my wife; I love her, and would take her into my lodge."

"Let me hear her say that she loves *you*, and the Sac girl will not come between you. Stand back, or the arrow flies from the string."

"You shall suffer for this, girl. Black-Hawk shall know how his daughter claims for a friend the daughter of the man who holds his land. We shall see how he likes that."

"Minneoba can talk to Black-Hawk; she does not need the white hunter to tell her what to say."

"She's a bu'ster, Will," said Dave Garrett, laughing. "I reckon you had better give it up. Come, little girl, don't be foolish. Get out of the way, for my sake."

Minneoba did not move, and the arrow was still ready to fly.

"Hark, Will! There come horses. Let's get out of this as quick as we can."

Black Will, shaking his clenched hand at the immovable figure of the Indian girl, sprung into the saddle, and the two men rode away at the top of their speed. They were scarcely out of sight when a party of mounted riflemen came up at a trot, but, seeing the two girls, they halted, and the leader dismounted and came toward them. He was a young, handsome fellow, in a fringed hunting-coat, booted and spurred, and wearing the insignia of Melton's mounted rifles, to show that he was captain of scouts. He lifted the cap gracefully from his head, and bowed low as he approached.

"Captain Melton of the mounted rifles, by way of introduction. May I ask if you have seen any thing of a man known in this region as Dick Garrett?"

"He rode away five minutes since in company with William Jackwood."

"The deuce he did! Excuse me, Miss, which way did he go?"

Sadie pointed out the road, and with a hasty adieu the young officer bounded into the saddle and the command went off at full speed, with Melton at their head. Sadie had noted that his dark eyes had rested admiringly upon her, and she was herself struck by his noble appearance, and Minneoba laughed softly. She could see that the two had met before.

"The young white chief is very brave. Sadie could love him!"

"Nonsense, you foolish girl," said Sadie, blushing. "I have only seen him twice before, and probably shall never see him again. Let us return to the house."

CHAPTER III.

BLACK-HAWK INSULTED.

THEY had scarcely reached the house when the sound of voices could be distinctly heard upon the river and Joe sprung to the door, from which the stream was plainly visible. A dozen canoes were upon the water full of Indians, crossing from the other shore.

"You'd better git out of sight, Minneoba," said Cooney Joe. "It won't be well for them to see you here unless you are forced to come out."

The Indian girl hurried into the cabin, and went into Sadie's room. A moment later a tumultuous band of Sacs, shouting out furious threats against the whites, landed near the cabin and came hastily toward it.

"Drunk as lords, every man jack of them," said Joe. "We've got to talk sweet to them or thar will be some ha'r raised right about yer. Thar; that's old Black-Hawk himself, by George. I wonder what he wants."

An Indian somewhat advanced in life, and wearing the usual insignia of a chief of the Sacs, headed the party, and a word from him stilled the clamorous tongues of the war-

riors. Mr. Wescott and Joe stepped out to meet them, and the chief received them by a lofty gesture.

"We come for corn," he said, "and my young men are so angry that they need the hand of a chief. It is hard that the Sac must come like thieves in the night to take corn from their old fields."

"It is hard indeed, Black Hawk," replied Mr. Wescott. "I am as much grieved as you can be that this thing has happened, and upon my word, I hope that you may settle this trouble peaceably."

"Why do you stay on the Sac fields then?" replied the Indian, morosely. "The words of my brother are wise, but they do not agree with his actions. I stand upon Sac ground, which is *not* sold and *can not* be sold unless Black-Hawk puts his totem on the paper and gives a belt. Why is the white man here then?"

"I bought of a man who claimed the right to sell," said Wescott, "but I am willing to give you a fair price for the fields, even now."

"Black-Hawk will not sell his fathers' graves," replied the chief, fiercely. "Look; your white men are making my warriors like themselves, good at talking but no workers. They drink the accursed fire-water and become hogs. In a few years, the name of Sac will be forgotten and they will be but beasts to carry the loads the white man puts upon their backs."

"It's no use talkin' now, Black-Hawk," said Cooney Joe. "I don't say it's right—because it ain't—for Keokuk had no right to sell your land. But, the thing's done and our fellers have possession, and I'm afraid they won't give it up."

"They must."

"Oh, pshaw; you ought to know that they are darned good at takin' things but they don't give back wuth a cent. You may as well build a village over yender."

"That they may come and take it again," replied Black-Hawk, with a bitter laugh. "Let us speak no more, for my tongue grows bitter in my mouth. Sons of the Sac, let us go for corn."

The Indian stalked away, followed by a shouting crowd of his adherents, and Cooney Joe looked uneasily at Wescott.

"I don't like this, 'square. You see our fellers ar' mighty rough on the Injins, and I heard some on 'em say that ef the Sacs came over to steal corn they'd give 'em an all-fired lickin'. Now if they do that it means war."

"I hope our men will not be so impudent," said Wescott. "They ought to give the poor fellows a chance to carry away corn for their suffering families, since they have dispossessed them of their land."

Half an hour passed, when suddenly there came a great tumult from the direction in which the Indians had gone. The shouts of men, the loud and continuous barking of dogs, and the occasional crack of fire-arms, could be heard.

Cooney Joe caught up his weapons, and followed by Mr. Wescott, hurried away in the direction from which the sound came. They had not gone half a mile when they came upon a great rabble of whites surrounding the party which had come over for corn, abusing them in every possible way. Showers of stone were hurled upon them, clods of earth and filth of every description was cast upon them, and they were fighting their way slowly back toward the stream, apparently unconscious of the insults heaped upon them. Foremost among them, walking with a firm step, but with a dark cloud gathering upon his brow, strode Black-Hawk. A stone had struck him on the forehead, and the blood was trickling slowly down his face, but he did not seem to be aware of the fact. Once or twice he turned his head when some unusually vile epithet was heaped upon him, with a haughty glance at the offender, which they remembered in the after times, for two men who struck him, and whom he marked for destruction, were the first to fall when the struggle commenced in earnest.

"White men," cried the chief, halting, at length. "I do not dare to stand in the track of Black-Hawk, upon his own land."

"Your land, you old thief," roared a man named Churchill. "You lie! It is ours—fairly bought—and we will keep it."

"Black-Hawk does not waste words with a man with a double tongue, who is only fit to sit with the women when the warriors are on the battle-field," replied the chief.

Churchill caught up a handful of sand and flung it into the face of the old chief. Black-Hawk trembled in every limb but not with fear, and he clenched his hands until the blood started from beneath his nails.

"Fool!" he hissed. "In the days to come, remember Black-Hawk!"

That the man had good cause to remember this insult, the history of that time will show.

The Indians went on their way, but all around them the confusion became greater, and it was with the utmost difficulty that they kept their ranks, and kept down their passions enough to prevent the use of the tomahawks, which every man carried. Had Black-Hawk but given the word, they would have rushed like tigers upon their prey, and torn the rabble asunder like cobweb. But the policy of the chief had been opposed to bloodshed, and he hoped to be able to get to the river without being forced to draw a weapon.

"Look at the black thieves," roared Churchill. "Down with them, boys; shower the mud on them; stone them out of the country."

He was but too well seconded by those who followed him, and many of the Indians were badly hurt by the missiles which were thrown at them. Directed by Churchill, three or four strong men rushed suddenly forward and laid hold upon the chief, with the intention of beating him.

"Dogs!" cried the Sac, casting them aside like feathers. "Take your clubs, sons of the brave."

Up to this moment the Indians had not lifted a hand, but at the order of their chief they lifted their clubs, and sprung forward with furious yells. The chief singled out Churchill, and leaped upon him like a tiger, but the man ran backward, and the chief, never thinking of support, followed him with uplifted club. Before he was aware of his danger he was in the midst of a circle of infuriated whites, who commenced an indiscriminate assault upon him, striking and kicking him with merciless force. It is impossible to say whether he would have escaped with life, but at this moment the rabble parted before the rush of strong men, and Cooney Joe and Mr. Wescott darted into the circle, and placed themselves beside the chief.

"Back, if you are men," cried Wescott. "What, thirty against one poor old man!"

"Keep cl'ar, keep cl'ar," cried Joe, flourishing his rifle in a threatening manner. "He's an Injin, but fair play's a jewel, you know. You won't strike him ag'in while I stand hyar."

"Get out of the way, Joe Bent," screamed Churchill. "What business have you to interfere?"

"Because I'm called on by a magistrate," replied Joe. "Keep cl'ar, I tell ye, or I'll make my rifle-butt acquainted with the softness of yer head. Back a little."

"Disperse, every one of you, and let the Indians return to the river, and I will see to it that you are punished for what you have already done," said Wescott, as they hesitated. There was some grumbling, but after a little they began to step away, and the little knot of Indians were left alone upon the field.

"I am sorry that this has happened, Black-Hawk," said Wescott. "You want corn, you say; go to my crib and take out what you want."

The chief did not reply, but he stood looking after the retreating forms of the white men, with a moody brow. Many a man who was in his grave before that season closed, might have been alive and happy but for that vile attack.

"Black-Hawk owes much to the white man," he said, slowly. "They have stolen his village, trampled upon his father's grave, plowed up the earth above the dead, and scored the earth with their axes. Now they have insulted Black-Hawk and he will remember."

"I would not take it too much to heart, Black-Hawk," said Wescott.

"Black-Hawk will remember," was the reply. "But look my brother. By this blood which drops upon the earth I promise friendship to you and yours. You are two just white men; and all the tribes shall honor you for what you have done this night. Let my good brother go toward the rising sun and stay until the tempest has passed by."

Wescott shook his head, and walked beside the chief to the river. He refused to take any corn, and as the canoes pulled off the two foresters looked at each other.

"This is bad, Joe," said Wescott, "but we must get to work. Do you know where the General is now?"

"He's at Jefferson Barracks—that's whar he is," replied Joe.

"Then he must be spoken to and at once. In the mean time I will take a horse and see other officers and concert measures for the public safety. The whole North-west is in danger, for many will follow Black-Hawk."

They hurried back to the cabin, and to his delight the settler found Captain Melton there, who had returned unsuccessful, from the pursuit of Black Will and Dick Garrett.

The young officer was well known to both Mr. Wescott and Cooney Joe, and was cordially greeted by both.

"What was this disturbance I heard just now, Mr. Wescott?" said Melton, as they shook hands. "It sounded almost like a battle."

"It was very near one as it was," said Wescott. "Our people surrounded a party of Indians who came over for corn, insulted them in every conceivable way, beat and threw stones at them and injured Black-Hawk quite severely."

"You don't tell me that they have hurt Black-Hawk?"

"Yes, and if I know any thing of the Indian he will resent it."

"This is too bad, just when we hoped to settle the matter peaceably. Let the people on the frontier look to it now, for there is trouble ahead as sure as we live. Hi, there, Stanley," he cried, addressing one of his men. "Ride to the Post and see the General. Tell him exactly what has happened, word for word, and when you have done that, go back by way of the island and tell the rest of the boys to come up."

"Do you think they will fight, captain?"

"Of course they will, and we have a lot of dunderheads who will do their best to force it on. With your permission, Mr. Wescott, I will stay here to-night, if you will let the men sleep in your barn."

"Certainly; if the house were large enough they should be welcome to that."

The command of Melton was an independent one, com-

posed principally of bordermen and scouts, selected for their known valor and knowledge of the country. As usual in such cases they were despised by the dandy regiments until two or three rough bouts between the men had taught them a lesson. They were very popular with the masses, however, and in a bush fight, were capable of doing more work than any body of men in the service.

Two or three couriers were dispatched in various directions, and then the party camped outside, while the captain entered the house, where he was received by Mrs. Wescott and the daughter. The elder lady had just returned from a visit down the river.

"This is Charley Melton, my prince of borderers, the best scout captain in the territories," said Wescott. "Captain, my daughter Sadie."

"I met Miss Wescott early in the evening when in chase of a desperate gambler who had shot a man over a card-table. And indeed we met twice in the village."

"I hope you caught him, captain," said Wescott.

"Sorry to say I did not. How the fellow managed to slip away I don't know, but when we got to the bend, all trace of them was lost. He had a man in his company whom I want to see, for I believe he is stirring up the Indians against us."

"You mean Black Will Jackwood, I'll bet," said Joe Bent.

"Yes; what made you think that?"

"'Cause I see the bloody cuss at Rock Island, whisperin' round old Black-Hawk, and it looked bad to me, somehow. It will be a 'markably good thing when he is hung up out of harm's way."

"That good thing will be very likely to happen if we have the good luck to catch them. Ha! What Indian girl is that?"

"Minneoba, the daughter of Black-Hawk," replied the girl, coming forward. "Let not Loud Tempest fear that she will speak the words she hears in the lodge of her white father in the ear of the Sacs. Minneoba is not a creeping serpent, and will not betray her friends."

"Loud Tempest, eh? Poetical name the Sacs have given

me, though for what cause I do not know. What have you there, Dix?"

An orderly had appeared at the door and saluted.

"Caught a Pottawatomie, just now, who claims that he has something to say."

"Who is he?"

"Little Fox."

"Pah! I don't think much can be made out of *him*. However, bring him in, and let us hear what he has to say."

The orderly turned and beckoned, and an Indian, greasy and smoke-begrimed, with a face which bore evident signs of hard potations, appeared in the doorway. This "lord of the forest" was very drunk. His eyes rolled in their sockets, and he found it easiest to stand by the aid of the door-post.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE FOX—NA SHE-ESCHUCK.

THE Indian was one of the worst specimens of his race—a creature naturally brutal, who had been rendered more debased by an excessive use of fire-water. As he clung to the door-post and looked at them out of bleared and watery eyes, he was as disgusting a specimen of the *genus homo* as could be found between the two oceans.

"Let me talk to this critter," said Cooney Joe. "I calen-late I understand the natur' of the unadulterated, unb'ilid, unwashed and unclean drunken red, as well as any man in the great Nor'-west. I do, by the livin' hokies. Hyar, you 'possum, speak up, and speak quick; what ar' ye looking fur now?"

"Fire-water; poor Injun *very* dry," replied this noble red-man. "Tire—much tire; walk durn good ways; mus' hab fire-water."

"You got to airn it fust, my noble red," replied Joe. "Come, agitate yer jaw; tell us what ye want."

"S'pose you give Little Fox fire-water, den talk. How *can* talk when no hab drink? Ugh!"

"That's the heathen philosophy, gents all," said Joe, with a look of supreme disgust. "No whisky, no news. Got sech a thing as a drain of sperrits handy, 'square?'

Mr. Wescott left the room, and returned shortly with a small flask of rum, from which he poured out a glass for the Indian, who drank it with avidity, smacked his lips, and held out the glass for more.

"Hold on," said Joe, pushing back the extended hand. "Not ef I know it, Injin. That tongue of yours begins to double, anyhow, and I reckon you'll hev to do some talking afore you git any more rum."

"Pottawatomie big warrior, *much* brave," replied the Indian, loftily, striking his clenched hand upon his broad breast. "Give Injun rum."

"I'll give you a bat 'long side your old head ef ye ask fur more afore you've done the work," said Joe, angrily. "Come now, speak up. What d'ye want?"

"Want rifle—want blanket—want *heap* fire-water!" replied Little Fox. "Got heap story to tell."

"Lies, probably. Come, out with it, and ef it is any use to us, then we'll pay han'sum. That's the time of day."

"Want him *now*," replied the Indian, with a surly glance at the speaker. "No tell news widout you put him down here."

"That won't do, Injin," said Joe. "You heard what the fellers done with Black-Hawk, just now. I've only got to say the word, and you go away the *sorest* Injin in the Nor'-west. Tell us any really important news, and we'll give you a rifle, two blankets and a keg of rum, and you kin drink you'self to death in a week."

"Much promise—little do. Dat white man's way," replied the Indian. "Little Fox no speak."

"Will you speak if I promise to give you what you ask?" said Captain Melton, advancing.

"Loud Tempest will do what he says," replied the Indian, with a drunken leer. "Little Fox will believe him."

"Very well, then; I promise to give you the rifle, blankets and rum, if you tell us all you came to tell."

"Give Injun stool; sit down like white man. Floor much dizzy; whirl round fast. Ugh!"

By the not very mild assistance of Cooney Joe the Indian was seated on a stool, with his back to the wall, and sat with drunken gravity waiting to be questioned.

"Go on with yer story, you red nigger," cried Joe. "And see yer, the minnit you begin to lie—and oh, Lord, how he kin lie when he lays his tongue to it!—that minnit I jump on you and yer ha'r comes off."

"Little Fox will speak with a straight tongue," replied the savage, drawing himself up. "Give Injun more rum, and he talk heap fast."

Cooney Joe poured out a very mild dose of rum and gave it to the savage, who gulped it down at once, and would have asked for more but that the expression of Joe's face taught him that such a measure would bring down upon his head the wrath of the hunter, and he prudently refrained.

"Black-Hawk much mad," he said. "See—white man take his village and plant corn among the graves. That no right in white man."

"No moril reflections, bummer," said Joe. "Git on with yer yarn, or off goes yer sculp."

"Black-Hawk has a great army," said the Indian. "His braves are coming in from the plains and their faces are painted for war. The white men must not sleep or they will all die."

It is needless to follow word by word the disjointed narrative of the drunken savage, interrupted as it was by appeals for rum, which was doled out to him in very small quantities by Cooney Joe, who feared that he would get too drunk to articulate. He sat swaying unsteadily to and fro, and told a tale which confirmed their fears. Messengers had been sent out to the various tribes, and all had agreed to follow the standard of Black-Hawk and assist him in driving out the invaders of their land. Nearly all the principal chiefs except Keokuk had given in their adhesion, and bands of warriors were already on their way to the place of rendezvous, not far from Rock Island, where there was a Sac village and a fort. Doubtless the Indian misrepresented the plans of Black-Hawk, but he told enough truth to make his

story tally with the preconceived ideas of the whites, and they looked at one another in silent dismay.

"This is very serious," said the captain of scouts. "This Indian has earned his reward, and if he will come into the village to-morrow he shall have the liquor; the rifle and blankets I can give him now."

He went out and brought in a very good rifle and two blankets, which he had obtained from the men. A flask of powder was added, and a mold to run bullets, and Little Fox staggered away, happy as a lord, little knowing that the possession of these articles would prove his death-warrant. With the weapon in his hands he staggered toward the village, where he was met by a young warrior of the Sac nation, whom, in his drunken blindness, he did not recognize as the youngest son of Black-Hawk, who was lurking about for information.

"My brother has a fine gun," he said in the Indian tongue, endeavoring to lay his hand upon the weapon. But Little Fox tore it away from him in drunken wrath.

"Wagh! It is the gun of the white man, and the Sacs will fall before it as the leaves when they are yellow," he said.

"My brother is very rich. He must have taken much fur to buy so fine a gun," said the young Indian, who already showed the qualities which afterward gave him a leading place in the tribe.

"Little Fox is the friend of the white man, and he can get a gun for nothing," was the reply. "When Black-Hawk comes with his warriors he will find the white men ready."

"Has my brother told the white men what Black-Hawk is doing?" said the young Sac, veiling his rage.

"Little Fox can speak or Little Fox can be silent," replied the Pottawatomie. "Look: to-morrow he is to have enough rum to last him a whole moon, because he is the friend of the white man."

"Fire-water is good," said the Sac. "Has my brother a canoe to carry it across the river?"

The Indian shook his head, and a sort of hazy idea passed through his clouded brain that he had already said as much as he ought concerning the affair.

"I have a fine canoe," continued the son of Black-Hawk. "Let my brother bring the rum to the Point, and I will help him carry it away."

The Pottawatomie nodded gravely, and went on his sinuous way, while the young chief darted into the forest, and taking a circuitous course, reached his father's village at early morning. The old chief was in his lodge, in an attitude of the deepest dejection, for he had not sought a quarrel with the whites. Near him, seated upon a pile of skins, and with a look of deep malice on his face, sat Black Will, holding his rifle in his brown right hand.

"Ha! here comes Na-she-eschuck," he said. "Now, Black-Hawk, let your great heart awake and listen to the words of your son. " Speak, Na-she-eschuck; what are the white men doing?"

"They go about among the lodges they have built above our fathers' graves and laugh because they have insulted Black-Hawk," replied the young Sac, fiercely. "Their ears are stopped to all thoughts of peace, and they long for war. Let them get what they seek, since they will have it so."

"What did I tell you, Black-Hawk?" said Black Will. "The scoundrels do not care for your great name, and they throw mud at you as if you were a common Pottawatomie, and not the head chief of a great nation. Will you bear this tamely?"

"Black-Hawk is an Indian," replied the proud old man, drawing up his stalwart form to its full height. "But he does not seek for war. If the white men will let us rest where we now are, I will send the warriors back, and we will be friends."

"Friends! Friends with the men who threw mud in your face and beat you like a dog?" cried Black Will. "Come, I have been mistaken in you. I thought you were a man ready to revenge your injuries, but the white men have cowed you until you dare not lift a hand against them."

Black-Hawk bounded to his feet with a terrible cry, and laid his hand upon a weapon. But that Na-she-eschuck sprang between him and the object of his wrath, it is doubtful whether the career of Black Will would not have ended upon the spot.

"Hold your hand, great chief," cried his son, forcing him back. "He sits under the shadow of your lodge, and you have smoked the pipe with him. Do not make yourself a dog since you have taken his hand."

"He has insulted a great chief," replied the old warrior, fiercely. "But, he is right; Black-Hawk is a dog to listen to the words of the white men, and to refuse to dig up the hatchet when so many warriors are ready to follow him to the fight."

"We must fight," said Na-she-eschuck. "Little Fox has been among the white men, and has told them that the braves are gathering at the call of Black-Hawk. He is a dead dog, and has taken a rifle and blankets, and is to have much fire-water, because he has betrayed us."

Black Will began to look uneasy.

"Has the scoundrel told them that I am here?" he asked

"I can not tell. He is to come to the point above the island with the price of his guilt, to-morrow, and I will be there to help him over the river."

A grim look crossed the face of Black-Hawk, as his son spoke.

"It is good," he said. "One traitor shall die, because he has sold himself for the fire-water of the white men. As for us, we will not strike the first blow, but if they take up the hatchet against us, then we will fight. But I will not remove."

"It is better for us to strike the first blow," said Black Will. "That is the main thing in war—to strike such a terrible blow, that their hearts will turn water in their bosoms. Look at me; I am of the blood of the white men, but I am not all white. A chief of the Sacs was my father, and he is dead. He died in chains, because he dug up the hatchet against the cowardly Chippewas. You have known and loved him, for you fought by his side. Black-Hawk, Red-Bird was the father of the man who speaks."

"Ha!" cried the chief. "Red-Bird was a man, but he could not bear the chains of the white man, and he died. Is my son the child whom he lost, who was born of the French squaw, who followed him from Detroit?"

Black Will inclined his head slowly, and Black-Hawk took

his hand in his own and pressed it again and again to his bosom.

"Black-Hawk can understand how the son of Red-Bird should hate the white man," he said. "We will fight side by side in this war, and if we die, let us die bravely. Are the warriors coming in, Na-she-eschuck?"

"They are gathering from every side. They have heard of the insult to Black-Hawk, and their hearts are hot in their bosoms. They will behave like men."

"It is good," said the chief. "Now we will go forth, and you shall see how Black-Hawk shall give a traitor his dues."

They left the lodge, and followed by the brother of Black-Hawk, and Napope, a celebrated chief, moved down toward the river, where the rest of the party concealed themselves while Na-she-eschuck brought out his canoe and crossed to the other shore.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRICE OF TREACHERY.

LITTLE Fox had remained all night in the white village, and as it was noised about that he had betrayed the plans of Black-Hawk, he had no lack of his favorite beverage, and morning found him as drunk as ever. Captain Melton sent a man with a canoe to carry the price of the information to the point above the island, and as the son of Black-Hawk was crossing the river, Little Fox was sitting in drunken state on his keg, dreaming of the glorious times he would have when he broached it in the seclusion of his lodge. He remembered indistinctly that some one had promised to help him across the river with his prize, but for his life could not remember who it was, and it almost sobered him when he saw Na-she-eschuck crossing from the other shore, and he fumbled with the lock of his rifle, and was half inclined to warn the Sac to keep off. But the fumes of the liquor were still in his brain, and the young chief landed and came toward him.

"The Pottawatomie did not lie to Na-she-eschuck," said he.
"Let us put the fire-water into the canoe."

"You put him in," said the owner. "Me watch."

He looked on while Na-she-eschuck placed the keg in the canoe and then followed, and, drunk as he was, managed to seat himself safely in the light craft. The Sac followed, and obeying the orders he had received, headed up the river, rounded the point of the island, and made toward the other shore. There was something in the stern, steadfast look of Na-she-eschuck which struck a chill into the heart of the traitor Pottawatomie, and almost sobered him, and twice he laid his hand upon his rifle, as if tempted to use it upon his companion. But, as often as he did so, the countenance of the Sac took on a pleasant air of good fellowship, which made it impossible to be angry with him.

"Why does not Na-she-eschuck go to the bank?" said Little Fox. "We will make a hole in the fire-water tub and drink."

The canoe was now headed directly for the point of the woodland which came down to the water's edge, and after drawing the light bark up the bank, they took the keg between them and carried it up to the first opening, where it was placed upon its end, while Little Fox, by the aid of his knife, succeeded in drawing out the bung.

"Wagh!" he cried. "Smell good, don't he, Na-she-eschuck? Now s'pose you get straws, we drink much, good deal."

The Sac went down to the water's edge and quickly cut two long, slender reeds, one of which he gave to Little Fox, and the two sat down over the keg, inserted the reeds, and began to imbibe after the manner of boys over a barrel of cider. But, although Na-she-eschuck went through all the motions of drinking rapidly, it is doubtful if he took as much as Little Fox, whose fiery eyes began to light up as he took in the burning fluid, and in five minutes he was more drunk than before he crossed the stream.

"E-yah! Little Fox is the friend of the white man. Who would not serve them when he can earn such drink?"

"Tell Na-she-eschuck what to do and he will get fire-water from the white man."

Drunk as he was, Little Fox looked at the speaker in astonishment. That the Sac youth would betray his father seemed impossible to him, and yet knowing how strong his own love of liquor was, and that he would betray a nation to obtain it, his surprise faded away.

"Will Na-she-eschuck do this? He can get more fire-water than Little Fox, for he knows more."

"What must I do?"

"Go to the white men and tell them all that Black-Hawk is doing, and my brother will be very rich."

"Has Little Fox done this?"

"He has done what he could, but he did not know much," replied the traitor. "Na-she-eschuck has been in the lodge of his father and heard his words."

"Na-she-eschuck will do any thing for fire-water," said the young chief, seeming to reel as he sat. Did the white men give all this for the message which was brought them by Little Fox?"

The Pottawattomie nodded, and again applied his mouth to the reed. But, at this moment the expression of drunken gravity passed away from the face of Na-she-eschuck. He bounded to his feet, with a look of wild rage upon his dark face and his hand upon his hatchet, and drunk as Little Fox was, he could see that he was deceived and that Na-she-eschuck was perfectly sober. He would have seized his rifle, but the foot of the young Sac was firmly planted upon it and he found it impossible to raise it, and the threatening action of Na-she-eschuck caused him to draw back in alarm.

"Dog—traitor!" hissed the chief. "You have betrayed our people into the hands of the enemy and you shall die. Black-Hawk, Napope and Wa-be-ke zhick, appear."

As he spoke, the three chiefs, accompanied by Will Jackwood, appeared from the bushes upon the right. Every face was black with fury, and the traitorous savage knew that his doom was fast approaching. He would have fled, but the strong hands of Na-she-eschuck and Napope were upon him, and in the twinkling of an eye his hands were bound behind him and Black-Hawk stood regarding him with a steadfast look, which had no pity in it.

"The ears of Black-Hawk have heard the words which have been spoken by the mouth of a traitor. Away with him to the sacred wood and then call the warriors to witness his fate."

Napope and Na she eschuck dragged him away, and Black-Hawk uttered a signal whoop which quickly brought four stalwart Indians to the spot, who, at the command of Black-Hawk, fastened up the keg, and making a sort of cradle of strong boughs, carried the liquor away toward the sacred forest, being solemnly warned not to touch it on their lives. After them marched the remaining chiefs and Black-Hawk, taking a sequestered path through the wood. Half an hour's walk brought them to a deep glen in the midst of the solemn woods, where a sort of rude altar was erected, and where the mystic ceremonies of their strange religion were nearly always observed. A solitary tree of small size, with a blackened trunk, the scene of many a sacrifice, was standing in the center of the glade, and there, tightly bound with green withes, stood Little Fox awaiting his fate.

The Indian was sober enough now, for nothing brings a man to his senses so quickly, no matter how much stupefied by drink, as the presence of danger. His eyes roved from face to face for some sign of relenting or pity, but he found none.

"Why has Black-Hawk brought a Pottawattomie here?" he said. "He dare not shed the blood of the son of Na-bo-lish."

"Na-bo-lish was a great chief but his son is a dog," he said. "Black-Hawk will not shed his blood, and a coward's death he shall die."

"Little Fox knows how to die, if die he must," replied the Indian, proudly. "He will speak no more and he dare Black-Hawk to do his worst."

The summons had gone forth, and one by one the chiefs and warriors began to enter the sacred wood. Every face was clouded, for they knew that they would not have been called to this place but to witness some great sacrifice. A single glance at the prisoner was all they gave, and then, man by man, they seated themselves in a great circle and waited for the coming of others. In less than an hour from the time

when Little Fox was taken, five hundred grim warriors were seated within the glade, and then Black-Hawk arose.

"Chiefs and warriors," he cried—"children of the same great Father, although our tribes are many—listen to Black-Hawk. He is getting old, his hair is gray, but he weeps for the sorrows of the poor Indian. Once, all these great hunting-grounds, in which the white man plants his corn, were the property of the Indian. There he lived—there he died, and there he lies buried. The steel of the white man's plow is among the bones, and he builds his lodge in the villages which once were ours.

"This should make an Indian very sad, and he should do all he can to help his people. But there are some who are so base that for the fire-water of the white men they would sell their fathers' bones. It grieves the heart of Black-Hawk that this should be so, for he loves the Indian. Now, when we have risen for our rights, and to protect our once happy homes, Indians of the pure blood stand ready to give us up a prey to the white man, that they may drink the strong water which makes men mad.

"Look upon this man. He is a son of the great No-bo-lis, the Pottawattomie. Once, he was a man and a mighty warrior. His foot was quick upon the war-path, and his hand ready to shed the blood of his enemies. The white men came and brought the strong water to the villages. Little Fox was no longer a man when he had taken it into his mouth. Let Na-she-eschuck speak, and tell the warriors what Little Fox has done, and then let them speak. I have done."

He sat down amid a strange murmuring, and Na-she-eschuck arose. The young chief was well known for his strict honesty, and they were assured that he would not lie to save his life.

"My father has spoken good words. Little Fox has sold us to the white men for a rifle, two blankets and this fire-water," striking the keg with his foot. "Out of his own mouth condemn him. Let him die."

Napope arose.

"I heard the words which came from the lips of Little Fox, and the Sac has spoken the truth. Let Little Fox die like a dog."

"And I heard it," cried the Prophet. "I—Wa-be-ke-zhick, the Prophet. He sold us to the white men and he deserves to die. Now let the chiefs and warriors speak."

There was a sudden movement among the listening warriors. They arose as one man, and every voice pealed out the solemn sentence: "He is a traitor; let him die!"

"You are women," shrieked the Pottawottamie, fiercely. "Do your worst; Little Fox will show you how to die."

"It is well," said Black-Hawk, slightly inclining his head. "We will not deny that Little Fox has been a great brave, but he is now a dog. Let the chiefs come about me, and we will have a talk."

They were not long in consultation, and then separated, the chiefs going about among the men and giving their orders. Then a long-sounding whoop from Black-Hawk called them into line, and they began to circle about the tree, pointing their fingers scornfully at the prisoner. Then Black-Hawk advanced and bared the breast of the prisoner, exposing the totem of his tribe.

"Look," he said, "he bears upon his bosom the sign of a great tribe. This is not well, and it must be removed. Wa-be-ke-zhick, advance, and cut the totem from his flesh."

"Cut away the totem of the great tribe," cried the warriors. "He has no right to wear it, who is a dog. Cut it away!"

The countenance of Little Fox was distorted with rage more than fear. Drunken and worthless as he had become, he was a true Indian, and felt keenly the disgrace about to be put upon him.

"Do not dare to make a chief a dog," he hissed. "Give me the torture, or give me death. Have I no friend among this people who will strike a sharp knife into my breast?"

"Has he a friend among the warriors who will do this?" said Black-Hawk. "Let him speak."

No voice replied, and the countenance of Little Fox changed from hope to fear.

"He has no friend," cried Black-Hawk. "Advance, Wa-be-ke-zhick; cut away the totem."

It was done, and Little Fox, if he lived, was ostracised for ever from his tribe and death would be to him a happy re-

lease. In the mean time, a great caldron had been placed upon a fire, and in this the keg of rum was poured, and a great quantity of gourds piled up beside it. The spirits had now begun to bubble, and taking up a little in a gourd, Black-Hawk advanced and offered it to the condemned man.

"For this you sold us to the white men, Little Fox. Drink, now that I give it to you. It is warm—it is good—it will make you strong."

As he spoke, he dashed the contents of the gourd against the breast of the doomed man, and Little Fox uttered an appalling shriek which rung with startling distinctness through the forest. Now ensued a horrible scene, as Indian after Indian caught up a gourd and dashed a portion of the boiling spirits upon the naked body of the traitor. Black Will stopped his ears and turned away his head to shut out the agonizing sights and sounds which the sacrifice presented. He was a cruel man by nature, but he found that the Indians could go beyond him in refinement of torture. At last the caldron was empty, and the victim stood literally parboiled at the stake, gnawing his lips to keep down the shrieks which arose in spite of himself. The faces of his stern executioners did not change, and they were about to commence some new species of torture, when Black Will sprung between.

"Stop, Black-Hawk; stand back there, Napope. This fellow deserves death. But you shall not torture him any longer. Kill him, and put him out of pain."

"Stand aside, white man!" cried Napope. "Why do you come between the warriors and a traitor?"

"White man! I am the son of Red-Bird, the Sac, who died in the white man's prison; and I say that this shall not go on. Will you kill him?"

"No; let the torture go on."

Black Will wheeled in his tracks, drew a pistol, and shot Little Fox through the heart. Bloody as the deed was, it was mercy, compared with the torture in store for the traitor. He started as the bullet pierced him, a look of ferocious joy passed over his face, and his head dropped upon his bosom. There came a wild rush at the immovable figure of Black Will, but the sonorous voice of Black-Hawk was heard, ordering them to stand back.

"Touch not the son of Red-Bird, lest you make an enemy of Black-Hawk," he cried. "Take down the body and cast it out in the open woods, that the wolves may eat all that is left of a traitor."

The work was done, and although there was some grumbling at being robbed of their victim so early, the bravest among the warriors were inclined to commend the bold action of Black Will, although, under the circumstances, none of them would have dared to do the same. The body was thrown upon the earth to rot, and the warriors on their march back to the village, when a runner, hot with haste, dashed into the forest and met Black-Hawk.

"Let the braves take their hatchets," he cried. "The white men are upon the march."

"Ha," cried Black-Hawk. "Do they come with arms?"

"Major Stillman comes, with many warriors," replied the runner.

"Let us see if they are friends," said Black-Hawk. "If they come in peace it is well. If they harm a hair of one of my young men they shall all die."

He sent out five young warriors with a white flag, who did not return. Later in the day three more went out and reconnoitered in the vicinity of the advance of the white men. They were pursued and two of them killed, the first blood shed in the war. The third escaped and brought the news to Black-Hawk, and they dug up the hatchet and prepared for war.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST BLOW.

IT must be admitted by unprejudiced men and thinkers of all lands, that the "Black-Hawk" war was precipitated by the rapacity of the whites. Not satisfied with driving the Indians from the better portion of their lands, they persisted still further in forcing them from their villages about Rock Island. They would have been less than men if they had not

resisted, but to the last, Black-Hawk insisted that he would not be the first to shed blood, and, as we have seen, the first man killed was one of Black-Hawk's band, by Stillman's party.

This man seemed to have little knowledge of the Indian character, and lacked the power of leading men. He had been sent out by General Atkinson in advance, with orders to scour the country, find out the position of the Indian force, and to act as his discretion seemed to dictate. Captain Melton was with him, and had occasion twice to remonstrate with him upon his manner of advancing through a country favorable to an ambuscade. The troop consisted of two hundred and seventy mounted men, marching without order, straggling where they liked, and firing at any stray Indian of whatever tribe, whom they chanced to meet.

When the flag of Black-Hawk appeared, Stillman ordered the bearers to be taken prisoners.

"Excuse me, Major Stillman," said Melton, as he heard the order. "Surely you do not propose to make these men prisoners?"

"Certainly I do, sir; take your place and let me hear no more."

"Your words will require an explanation at another time and place, my good sir," said Melton. "Be so good as to remember that I had no orders to join you, and that if you insist upon such conduct, I will leave you at once. These men came to you under the shadow of a white flag, and you have no right to take them prisoners."

"Will you take your place, Captain Melton?" roared Stillman, "or must I put you under arrest?"

Melton said no more, but fell back to the head of his troop, fully determined to leave the irate major if he persisted in his conduct.

The three bearers of the flag were sent to the rear, under guard, and the troop proceeded in the same disorderly manner. Some time after the stragglers in advance caught sight of the warriors who had been sent out to see what had been done with the bearers of the flag, and were pursued, and two of them shot down without mercy, the rest escaping, by taking to the woods in front. No sooner had he beheld this cruel and uncalled for butchery, than the young captain of

scouts called to his men and they wheeled out of the line, faced about, and marched back toward the river.

Stillman, boiling with rage, called his men to a halt, and rode back.

"What is the meaning of this conduct, Captain Melton?" he hissed, fairly foaming at the mouth. "How dare you detach your command without orders?"

"If you think you have men enough in your rag-tag and bob-tail command to stop us, you had better try it on, Major Stillman," said Melton, coolly. "I for one will not give countenance to *murder*, as you are doing."

"Murder, sir?"

"Murder is the word. Those Sac's were doing no harm who were just killed by your men, and did not even use their weapons when your scoundrels took after them. Go on your way, sir; I will not march a foot further with you."

"I will have you court-martialed, upon my return, sir," cried Stillman.

"Very well; I shall take an opportunity to tell the court some things not to your credit. Good-day, sir. But, for the safety of your men I tell you to call in your stragglers, march in a more orderly manner and beat the bushes thoroughly before you enter. Attention, scouts; forward."

And the compact little body rode away at a killing pace, leaving Major Stillman to his own devices.

Stillman hesitated for some time before advancing, for he knew that the desertion of Captain Melton was a great loss to him. While he stood in doubt, the men who had killed two Indians came back at a gallop and announced that the Indians were just across Sycamore creek and in some force. All was now confusion in the white camp. Some who had dismounted sprung into the saddle, and with wild shouts the disorderly band rushed on, headed by the men who had just come in. Black-Hawk had not supposed that Stillman intended to attack him, and the greater portion of his force were on the other side of the village; in all, the great chief had only forty men under his command when Stillman's men came up at the gallop, strung out across the plain, man, by man, according to the speed of their horses,

and in this manner crossed the creek. Black-Hawk had not hoped that they would thus give themselves a prey to him, and his ambuscade was quickly formed.

When half the party had crossed the creek and were massed in disorder upon the bank and the rest were struggling up, some crossing the creek, and others yet upon the plain beyond, the war-whoop of the Sac announced the onset, and from every side the warriors poured in upon the foe. One withering volley was poured in, which strewed the earth with dead and dying forms, and at the same moment the charge was made and the knife and hatchet was doing its silent but deadly work before the doomed men had time to lift a hand. To show the utter foolishness with which the advance was made, it is enough to say that the warlike major was never in the fight at all, so quickly was the force which had crossed the creek disposed of by the furious attack of Black-Hawk.

The cry was, "Satan take the hindmost." Hardly waiting for Stillman's order to retreat, they broke and fled in every direction, each man for himself, lashing their horses to get out of the fearful imbroglio into which their own foolhardy conduct had forced them.

Thus, in one desperate charge forty Indians had put two hundred and seventy white men to flight! It is no discredit to the West, for the men of Stillman's force, under a different leader, would have laughed at the efforts of the Sac force. They came into Dixon's Ferry as they had left Sycamore creek, one at a time, and the loss gradually dwindled from seventy to about one-fourth of the number.

The alarm went forth through the land, and the little force of Sac warriors were magnified into an army. The work had been done, however, and a scene of blood and death was about to be enacted upon the border.

Captain Melton rode back to the settlement, after leaving Stillman, but had not gone far when the flying men from the band of heroes began to come up with him. Seeing that the war was begun in earnest he faced about and prepared to meet them as best he might, knowing nothing of the small force of Black-Hawk. After waiting all night for some sign of Indian pursuit, as none was made he drew

off his men and reached the settlement some hours after the arrival of Stillman, who had been filling the ears of the inhabitants with stories of the cowardly conduct of the captain.

The captain quickly set matters right, and only that he had more important business upon his hands, would have followed Stillman to the camp of Atkinson, to which he had directed his steps. Taking ten of his men, he rode up the river, to the residence of Mr. Wescott, but as he drew near, he found evidences upon every hand of the presence of the destroyer, and as he crossed the hill, saw, to his horror, that during the last night the cabin had been attacked. Wild with fear, he rushed in at the broken door and found every thing in confusion, and scattered here and there, various bits of Indian finery, beads and the like, which told him beyond a doubt who had done the work.

"Indians," said one of the men. "Good heaven, captain, they are killed!"

They explored the house everywhere, but not a trace of the family could be seen. Upon the floor near the entrance was a little pool of fresh blood, which looked as if it had been shed the night before, and Melton looked at it with a shudder.

"Where are they?" he groaned. "Who has done this ruin?"

"It is always so in an Indian war," said his lieutenant. "Some band of Indians coming up to join Black-Hawk, have rushed in on them, before they had time to fire a shot."

"Somebody has been hurt," said Melton. "Ha! what have you got there, Chris?"

One of the men came forward, holding in his hand a heavy knife, with about three inches broken from the point. Upon the hilt of the weapon, rudely engraved, was the name, "R. Garrett."

"Dick Garrett has been here, then," said Melton, turning pale; "and if he has taken Sadie Wescott, it is done for Black Will. Oh! heaven, what shall we do?"

"Hold on," said a feeble voice from beneath their feet. "Help me out of this and I'll let ye know."

"Some one is in the cellar," said Melton. "Up with the trap and let him out."

The trap-door was opened, and Cooney Joe, bleeding and ghastly, appeared at the foot of the ladder. A dozen hands were extended to help him up, and he was seated upon one of the stools, gasping for breath.

"What is this, Joe?" said Melton. "Speak, man; don't you see that I am in torture until I know the worst?"

"The worst is, that a party of red niggers, headed by Dick Garrett, made a rush at us last night, and took Mr. Wescott and the gal prisoners. I had a tussle with Dick Garrett, and one of them cussid reds hit me over the head with a hatchet, and I fell into the cellar. I do'no' what drove 'em off, but they did not come down to raise my wool, and I've been too weak to git out without help."

"You don't know which way they went?"

"Don't I tell ye they knocked the life clean out of me, the fust crack? I didn't fairly git my senses back till I heerd ye talking. 'Tain't above two hours sence they left."

"How many had Dick Garrett under him?"

"Mebbe twenty, the ugliest-lookin' lot of whites painted red you ever set yer livin' eyes on. I'll be bu'sted ef they wouldn't spile a lookin'-glass by jest peekin' into it; darned lot of ruski'ns!"

"We must follow them," hissed Melton, through his set teeth. "I'll have the girl out of their hands, it I have to follow them into Black-Hawk's village."

"See here; Black-Hawk do'no' nothin' 'bout it. The pi-zen cusses took his darter with 'em, but she sp'iled one chap, sure as you live. He got an arrer clean through him."

"She is a brave girl, Joe. Oh, how sorry I am that you are hurt."

"Hold hard; you ain't goin' without me, you know. One of your chaps wash out this cut, and put some plaster on it, and we'll make it do. I'm goin', you bet."

"I fear you are not strong enough."

"You be grannied! You see I've got a sort of snickering notion after that there Injin gal, and I'll be blowed if I don't help her."

In his border life Melton had picked up a slight knowledge of surgery, and he washed and dressed the wound as well as the limited conveniences at his disposal would admit. Hav-

ing done so, Cooney Joe rose up, though somewhat "weak and staggering," to use his own expression, and was ready to "fight or run," as circumstances might require.

"Now see here, cripples," he said. "That carroty-headed son of a gun, Dick Garrett, is a whole hoss-team, you bet ye. He'll fight—he will—till the teeth meet in the flesh. Oh, you bet he is on it, now. He kin shoot, and when we foller him, we ain't tracking Sacs, so look out for thunder."

"And he is in league with Black Will, and that scoundrel has a hundred russians at his beck and call," said Melton. "We never should have had any trouble with the Indians but for men of his kidney."

"Now fur trailing," said Cooney Joe. "Stand one side, you critters, and let the old man work! I've got a mark that can't be beat, fur Dick wears the biggest moccasin of any man in the Nor'-west. Look around mighty spry, and when you find a track like a young canoe, that's Dick Garrett's hoof."

The trail was quickly found, and led to the northward. They followed it swiftly, Cooney Joe bending slightly in the saddle, and keeping his eyes on the trail, while the rest followed, keeping far enough behind not to disturb the trail. After a march of nearly two miles, the track suddenly ended upon the bank of the Father of Waters, and they knew that the scoundrels had taken to the stream.

"Now ain't this cussid mean; ain't it enuff to make a man raise his hand against his venerable ancestor?" roared Joe. "They've took water, theyhev. Here; send back two men with the hosses, fur we've got to hoof it."

This plan was adopted, and two of the men returned with the horses, while the rest searched about among the reeds, and after some trouble found two rude dug-outs concealed, in which, by making two trips, they crossed the great stream. Here they scattered and searched up and down for the trail which they had lost, still guided by the ponderous hoof of Dick Garrett.

"Oh, ain't he pizen, that Dick!" growled Cooney Joe. "Its just his nat'r'l cussedness, you know. He's aweer that I like to ride, and he jest done this to be mean. Comes nat'r'l to him, meanness does. Here you are; come on, boys!"

He had taken up the recovered trail as if no interruption had occurred, and the party moved on across the plain. They were tried men, who had followed Captain Melton in many an hour of danger, but even their hearts gave a great leap as they plunged into the Indian country, perhaps never to return.

CHAPTER VII.

OVERBOARD.

THE surprise of the occupants of the log-cabin by the river was sudden and complete, when at a late hour the house was surrounded by a motley group headed by a man who, in spite of his paint and feathers, could not hide from so acute a scout as Samuel Wescott that he was a white man in disguise. The rush was so sudden that they had been overthrown before they had fairly time to reach their weapons, and the captured men were at once hurried to their horses, and the band made off at a rapid rate up the stream. Mr. Wescott was wounded, but in spite of that the savage white leader urged him on, threatening him with the point of his knife if he faltered or turned aside. They reached the river, when, to the surprise of all, a flat-boat shot out from the western bank and made toward the eastern shore. The men who held the poles were either white men or showed a marvelous aptitude for flat-boating, an accomplishment rarely to be looked for in an Indian who is not in love with manual labor. The bow of the flat grated on the low beach, when the party went on board, horses and all, and they pushed out into the stream.

"This boat belonged to Captain Hughes' father," whispered Sadie. "Is it possible that these wretches have murdered him and his crew?"

"He ought to have come down some days ago," said Mr. Wescott, in an uneasy tone. "I am afraid that the good old man has indeed fallen. Be careful what you say, for these scoundrels understand every word you speak."

At this moment the chief approached and caught Mr. Wescott by his wounded arm, causing him to utter a low cry of pain, while the blood gushed from under his hand.

"No whispering," he hissed, dropping all at once his assumed Indian habits. "I'm no baby, Sam Wescott, but a bird of the woods, a Mississippi roarer, and I can lick the universal earth a-flying."

"Dick Garrett!" cried Wescott, in a tone of surprise. "I thought so."

"You know me, do ye?" said Dick, with an air of bravado. "All right, 'square, it's all the wuss for you, for Dick Garrett don't let no man live that knows he wears an Injin rig. Git ropes hyar and take a couple of hitches on this chap, some of you fellers."

"What do you intend to do?" cried Wescott, struggling. "Hands off, you scoundrels!"

"Tie him tight, boys," replied Dick Garrett, in fiendish glee. "Teach the cuss to be so sharp, I will, before I git done with him. Now, then, Sam Wescott, if you've got any prayers to say, say 'em quick, for overboard you go when we get to that snag in the river."

"You cannot mean it," said Wescott. "Such a cold-blooded and unprovoked murder—"

"Oh, give us a rest or I'll gag you," replied Dick Garrett. "The matter of a man more or less in the world ain't going to shake it to its center, you bet, and when I say you've got to go under, then you go."

"Have your way, then, murderous wretch," cried the brave man, drawing himself up proudly. "I will not beg for my life from such as you, and am ready to die, if my time has come, as bravely as another. Do your worst."

Sadie by this time began to comprehend the danger in which her father stood, and would have come to him, but she was forced back by one of the rough men who wore the Indian garb, but who could not conceal a certain flat-boat swagger which betrayed him.

"He crows loud, boys, don't he?" said Garrett; "mighty loud for a bird of his feather that's only got three minutes to live. Keep the gal away; she ain't got leave to die yet."

"Let me go to my father," pleaded Sadie. "Oh, sir, you will not kill him for a single hasty word?"

"I rather think I shall," replied Garrett, as cool and composed as if talking of any ordinary event. "The man's got to go. I don't advertise to be a saint, and when a man runs ag'mst me and calls me a murderer, I reckon it's about time for him to pass in his chips. I'm a peaceable man—I will have peace, or a fight."

This strange man was dreadfully in earnest. Human life was to him a thing of no price—we might lose it to-day or to-morrow, or we might live a hundred years—a small matter, not to be taken into account. He had no objections to killing a man, and if he had stood in his way, in any manner, it became a *duty* to put him aside.

They were approaching the snag, and the desperado was about to order the prisoner to be thrown into the water, when the boatmen were suddenly thrust aside, and Minneoba, holding her bow in her hand, darted forward and leveled an arrow at his breast.

"Look, white man," she cried, "Minneoba is the daughter of Black-Hawk, and she can not lie; if you do harm to the good white man, I will send an arrow through your heart."

"Why, you cat?" hissed Dick Garrett, turning upon her with a devilish look. "Stand out of the way."

But Minneoba would not obey him. It was the second time she had found her arrow effective, and it had some influence upon the man who "would have peace or a fight." Although full of mad hate, he knew that she could aim an arrow well, for he had seen her skill tested in the Indian towns.

"What in the devil's name made me bring this cat on board?" he uttered. "Better far have left her behind to find her way to the village as best she could. Look you, Minneoba," he added aloud. "You know that I would not willingly do you a wrong, but you must get out of the way."

"No," replied Minneoba, stamping her foot. "Minneoba will not move, and if Garrett does wrong to the good white man, he shall die."

"Now, my girl, be careful, please; I'll have to take measures you won't like if you don't get out of the way."

"Minneoba will shoot," replied the girl, with flashing eyes, still pointing the arrow at his breast. Garrett nodded to one of his men, and while the leader expostulated with her he stole behind and suddenly caught her by the arm in a firm clasp. With a cry of anger the girl caught the arrow in her disengaged hand and drove it through the arm of her captor, who released her with an oath, but before she could strike again, Garrett had her in his arms.

"Now then, lads!" he cried. "I'll hold this beauty fast, and if she struggles I'll take toll from her lips."

"Cease to struggle, Minneoba," said Mr. Wescott. "You only expose yourself to new indignity without the chance of aiding me. I am ready to meet my fate, although it is a hard one, but it grieves me to think that I die by the hands of white men. Sadie, farewell—farewell, my dear child. All that I have is yours and your dear mother's. Thank God that she at least was absent when this blow fell."

"I can not see you die," she sobbed. "Oh, Richard Garrett, will nothing move you to do right?"

"That depends on what you call *right*. Now you don't think it right to beat a man at the pictures or billiards or to pick his pocket, or crack a bank. Now I do, so we won't seem to agree, no matter how you fix it, so I guess we may as well end this now. Toss him over, boys."

"It don't seem scarcely right," said the rough young fellow who was helping Sadie back. "Why not duck him, and then let him out, boss?"

"Because he knows I wear an Injin disguise. It's all very well for you that he don't know, but I ain't so easy suited. Toss him over, I say, and make no words."

They lifted the bound man and flung him over the rail, while with a thrilling shriek Sadie fell senseless into the arms of the man who held her. He laid her gently down, and made a spring at the taffrail, and his body struck the water almost as soon as that of Mr. Wescott, who was unable to help himself.

"Come back here, you born fool," screamed Dick Garrett. "What do you think the Cap will say when he hears how you act?"

"You go to —," said the rough but good hearted-fellow

naming a locality not sought after by humanity generally.
“I’m going to save this man.”

“Then by —” hissed Dick Garrett, “you stay with him; set in your poles, boys. Tom don’t want to come on board.”

By this time the man had seized the helpless form of Wescott, and with his clasp-knife managed to cut the bonds upon his hands and feet, and Wescott at once began to swim, but feebly at first, and the fiendish order of the desperado leader rung in his ears, and they saw the boat moving slowly away, leaving them alone on the wide river.

“We’re done, stranger,” said the man called Tom. “I done my best, but he’s run from us.”

“You can swim to the bank,” said Mr. Wescott, noting with what ease the man sustained himself.

“I reckon.”

“Then do so and leave me to my fate,” replied Wescott. “You have already risked too much for me.”

“When I quit a man in that way I reckon you’d better call round with a rope and string me up. It’ll suit me fust rate. Let the current take ye square; we’ll fetch up somewhere I reckon, and when we do, and I onc’t git on the trail of that Dick Garrett, won’t I make him howl!”

Even as he spoke the two men were moving on a course diagonal with the current, the stronger man giving all the support he could to his wounded companion. But the shore seemed far away and Wescott felt that he could not go much further.

“Save yourself,” he gasped. “My wound has opened again and I am losing strength.”

“I won’t do it,” replied Tom, through his set teeth. “Hold up a little; I’ll save you yet.”

“There is no hope,” replied Wescott. “Avenge me if you can and save my daughter from that villain. You can do me better service in that way than by staying with me now.”

At this moment the surge came down heavily and buried the speaker beneath the water. Tom paddled to and fro, looking for him in vain, for the water had claimed its prey, and nerving himself to the task the young man struck out

resolutely for the shore, which he reached nearly exhausted. Then he ran along the bank and looked for some sign of Wescott, but he looked in vain. The surface of the river was blank.

CHAPTER VIII.

MELTON'S SCOUT—A BUSH FIGHT.

TOM BANTRY had been a flatboatman since he was old enough to hold a pole, and now for the first time paused to consider how far he had gone down the road of sin. He was conscious of many evil deeds already performed, but the stain of blood was not upon his soul, and although pledged to his vile companion he could not stand by tamely and witness the murder of so good a man as Samuel Wescott. But his good intentions had come to naught, and the brave man was dead.

The flatboatman rose and looked about him, a wicked light coming over his dark face. "They taught me evil, them cusses did," he muttered. "I'd the making of a man in me, but they sp'iled me, and now they've killed as good a man as ever walked the earth. I'll remember that ag'inste, old man Garrett."

He was literally worn out, and dropped down upon the grass and slept until morning. He woke at last and started up refreshed, only to find a party of white men were upon the opposite bank, and with his paint upon him, Tom knew that it would be far from safe to meet them, and he skulked away, keeping under cover of the bushes, and then made a circuit through the bushes, designing to cross their path and ascertain who they were. As he crept forward with that intention, he heard a slight rustling in the bushes in front, and the long, snake-like head of Napope appeared above the bushes, signaling him to fall back. He did so, involuntarily dropping his hand upon his knife, which he had not lost in the last night's struggle in the stream, when he remembered that Napope regarded all his party as friends and that

he still wore the garb of an Indian. He dropped back and the next moment Napope joined him.

"The white dogs come," he said, in a fierce tone, "and the heart of a chief is big in his bosom. They shall die without knowledge."

"Who are they?" demanded Tom.

"They are white and they are not the friends of Jackwood the son of Red-Bird. Where is your gun, my brother?"

"I lost it last night," replied Tom, a little embarrassed. "Let me look out and see what white men come."

He advanced to the edge of the woods and looked out, and could detect a white party moving hastily across the plain. Foremost among them was a man whom he had known well some years before, Cooney Joe, and behind him came Captain Melton and his gallant men, and it flashed through the mind of Tom Bantry that they were in pursuit of Dick Garrett. His heart stood still, for a backward glance showed him fifty stout Sacs, armed to the teeth, lying under the bushes waiting for the coming of the hated white men. Twenty-four hours ago Tom Bantry would have delighted in this, but now he was changed, and racked his brains for ways and means to acquaint them with the ambush before them, without destruction to himself.

Napope waved his hand, and, as if by magic, every warrior disappeared, and a stillness like that of death fell upon the scene. The whites came in rapidly, unsuspecting of danger, and passed through the first bushes, when they were surprised to hear a sudden crash and a yell of surprise and anger. The crash came from Tom Bantry, who had managed to fall down with a great noise, at the same time giving the yell which startled the white rangers.

"Tree, boys!" yelled Cooney Joe. "Tree and fight. Injins thar, by the big horn spoon."

The men who followed Cooney Joe were Indian fighters of the first class, and the order had scarcely been given when every man was sheltered by a tree and had his rifle ready for action. This was not done a moment too soon, for the feathers of the savages began to show above the bushes, and several shots were fired, until a commanding voice shouted to the warriors to hold their fire.

"What do the white men seek?" cried Napope. "They have been beaten once; must we beat them again?"

"That's Napope," cried Cooney Joe. "I know the old cuss, and he kin fight, if he is an Injin; but we'll lick him out of his moccasins. Say, Injin, you'd better clear the way; you ain't got the major to fight now."

"Napope does not seek the scalps of the white men," cried the Indian. "If they bring the scalps to him, he will take them, but he does not thirst for blood. Let Captain Melton turn back and cross the river."

"The path must be clear for me to pass through," replied Melton. "The hatchet has been dug up and its edge turned against women and children, and the good white man, Wescott, with his daughter, has been carried away, and we think the Sacs know where they are."

"The Sacs do not know," replied Napope, proudly. "Does the white man take us for Menomonies or Chippewas? The Sacs are men and not dogs; they do not fight against women and children."

"Napope is a brave man, and will not lie to save his life," said Melton. "Let us pass on safely, and then there shall be no blood shed, for we seek only those who have stolen the brave man Wescott and his child."

"My brother must turn back," replied the chief. "There is no path over the Indian country for white soldiers until peace is made; but if the good white man and his child are here, they shall be made welcome, and no harm shall come to them if Napope can give them aid. But Melton must take his warriors and go back to his people."

"We will not turn back," replied Melton, angrily, "unless we take the friends we seek with us. Let Napope clear the way, or we will try to go on without his leave."

"The white men will find knives and hatchets in the path," replied the chief, grimly. "Go back as you came, and all shall be well; refuse, and you shall find that my young men carry guns."

"I don't like this," whispered Cooney Joe in the ear of Melton. "They've got twice as many warriors as we have, and the chances are good for a fight. I never like to back out, but I don't know but it's the safest plan."

"It won't do," said Melton. "These scoundrels will get too impudent if they are allowed their own way too much. There must be a fight, and at once, and the boys must do their best. I know them too well to think that they will back down for twice their number of Sacs."

"What does my brother say?" cried Napope.

"Fight," replied Melton. "We will go on." Napope disappeared immediately, and scarcely had he done so when a bullet whizzed by the ear of the young scout as he hastily took to a tree. The fight now commenced in true Indian-fashion, the Sacs forcing the fighting and running from tree to tree to get nearer to their enemies. But they found a different party from that with which they had fought upon Sycamore Creek. Every bullet had its billet. Did an Indian show hand or foot from behind his shelter, it was at once the mark of a well-aimed ball. The men who followed Melton had lived by the rifle, and were not likely to miss their aim easily, while the Indians were notoriously bad marksmen, not having the patience to perfect themselves in the use of the rifle.

Besides, the weapons they carried were not of the best description, being those furnished by the traders against the law, and their powder was "contract," warranted not to burn except at a slow fire. But their numbers made the position of Melton's small force decidedly unsafe, and they began to close in upon every side, and every moment Melton expected a charge with hatchet and knife, most fearful weapons in Indian hands. But the steady valor of the scouts had inspired the savages with a respect for them, and they fought warily, losing a man now and then, and inflicting little damage upon the foe.

"They'll charge soon, boys," whispered Cooney Joe. "Pass the word down the line to have a charge ready for the rush. Don't throw away a shot."

The rifles were ready when Napope gave the order, and at his signal-yell they bounded out like tigers, flourishing their bright weapons in the air.

This was the moment for the Border Riflemen, and each picked his man and fired, and every bullet found a mark. Supposing the rifles empty, the Sacs rushed on, but they were

mistaken, for up rose ten more riflemen, and the head of the assailants seemed to melt away before their fire. It was more than Indian endurance was equal to, and they again buried themselves in the bushes, in spite of the fierce orders of Napope, who, although severely wounded in the shoulder, urged the men on.

He was ably seconded by Na-she-eschuck, who was also slightly wounded.

"Well done, my lads," cried Melton. "Bravely done, riflemen; they have not Sycamore Creek to brag of this time, at any rate."

Napope collected his men under cover of the bushes, but his heart was full of anger against the gallant band of scouts, whom he had expected to sweep from the path in that headlong charge. So far from doing that, over one-third of his men were placed *hors de combat*, and several more partially disabled. Aroused by the invectives of the two chiefs, they again began to advance, but more cautiously, sliding from tree to tree, with great care, and exposing themselves as little as possible in doing so. But the riflemen managed to inflict new damage upon them before they came in fair charging distance. Napope had separated his force into three parts, sending out a small party upon each flank of the white force, and Melton was compelled to detach eight men, four upon each flank, to keep off these troublesome flanking-parties. This left him but twelve men in his main force, opposed to over thirty determined warriors, eager for the blood of those who had slain so many of their friends.

"We have got ourselves into a pizen scrape, Cap," said Cooney Joe, as he stood with his back against a tree, looking to the priming of his rifle; "but that's only one way to do, and that is to fight our way out. We kin lick 'em if more don't come; that's what I'm afraid of."

At this moment the rush was made, and as before, the whites divided their fire, so as to give the Indians two volleys before they reached the trees, and then with yells which vied with those of the Indians, they formed a line among the trees, and beat back the savages with knife, hatchet, and clubbed rifle. It was a desperate affair while it lasted, and the wild valor of the scouting party prevailed, and they were driving

back the Indians step by step, when one of the men who had been sent to the right flank came running up.

"Party of Injins coming across the plain, on a run, Cap," he reported. "I reckon we'd better git."

"Easier said than done," said the captain, turning aside a blow with his heavy knife. "Shoot that fellow, Ed."

The borderer brought his rifle to his shoulder, and the savage fell, shot through the heart.

"Have the Indians on the flanks retreated, Ed?" demanded Melton, as he fired a pistol at a savage who was poising his hatchet for a throw, and the savage went down.

"No, they ain't all gone yet," replied the man, who was coolly reloading his discharged rifle. "I guess we'd better call in the men and make a rush through these red devils, before the others can come up."

A signal whistle, well known to the "merry men" of Melton, brought in all upon the flank, and with shouts of victory, all charged upon the broken and demoralized body of Saes. They had fought bravely, but their courage was not proof against the assault, and they broke and fled in every direction through the woods, pursued by the victorious whites, who only wanted to get deeper into the woods, to avoid the force coming up in their rear. They would not have done this had they known that it was Dick Garrett and his party, bringing as prisoner, Sadie Wescott, whom Minneoba would not leave.

Scouts from the party of Napope having discovered the coming of the disguised whites, and apprised the chief, he hurried out to meet them, and started as he saw who they held as prisoner.

"Ha?" he cried. "Then it is my brother who struck the wigwam of Wescott, and took him prisoner?"

"Yes," said Garrett. "You see our boss, Will Jackwood, wanted this girl, and sent me to take her."

"Where is Wescott, now?" demanded Napope.

"Well," said Garrett, hesitating, "he's gone under; that's what's the matter with him."

"Let my brother speak more plainly," said the chief. "What has become of Wescott, the good white man?"

"He has been murdered," replied Sadie, coming forward,

quickly. "Chief, you know what he was, and that he never willingly wronged the Indians. You know, too, that when the mob in the village assaulted Black-Hawk and yourself, he came to your aid and helped you to escape. He has been brutally murdered, by this base wretch, Garrett."

"The girl lies, I reckon," said Garrett, sullenly. "See here, chief; is it calculated in your tribe that women are any better off for having too much tongue?"

"My brother must let the Wild Rose speak," replied Napope. "When the Sacs come hungry and thirsty into her father's lodge, she is always ready to give them food and drink; when they are weary, and the night air is cold, there is always a warm place by the fire to spread a blanket. The child of Wescott must be allowed to speak."

"Now look here, chief," said Garrett, in the same ferocious tone. "'Tain't noways likely I'm going to come down to you or any man on earth. If Wescott was killed, he was my pris'ner, and I had a right to do what I would with him. Have you any thing to say against it?"

Napope inclined his head slowly, as recognizing the justice of the remark. The life of the man was as little regarded by the Indians as by Garrett, and Napope rather liked the tone of insolence he assumed.

"Napope," cried Sadie, "I want you to listen to me. This wicked man threw my father into the water, from the flat-boat, and he has not been seen since. Will you see a good man murdered and refuse to avenge him?"

Napope was evidently troubled, for just now he needed the assistance of Garrett and his men, and did not wish to make him angry.

"We will speak of that another time, Wild Rose. Until then, rest safely with Minneoba, the daughter of Black-Hawk, while we do the work of men. Garrett, do you know that Loud Tempest is here and he has beaten the men of Napope, and killed many?"

"Loud Tempest; do you mean Captain Melton?"

"Yes; he is here, with the white hunter Joe, and many warriors. Napope can not rest until we have his scalp."

"Cooney Joe! Why, I give him a lick last night that ought to have settled any decent man for good."

"He is alive, and fights like a Sac," replied Napope. "They are in the woods and we must follow and take their scalps."

"I'll bet he's arter me," muttered Garrett. "He don't owe me any good will for work I've done, and I've swore to have his hair. That's my hand on it, Napope, and I'll never quit you until he or I have gone under."

Sadie had started at the name of Melton, and was conscious of a feeling of joy that he had thought enough of her safety to follow her into the Indian country, but, as she glanced over the line of ferocious faces, she was sorry that he had incurred this danger. But she followed the party until they reached the battle-field and found it strewn with the slain bodies of the Sacs who had fallen, each one pierced by the deadly bullet.

"These ain't babies we are following," said Garrett. They kin fight, Melton's scout kin, and ef we lick 'em we lick a good crowd. How many has he got with him?"

Napope extended the fingers upon both hands twice.

"Twenty? We've got our work cut out then, for twenty of Melton's Mounted Rifles, with the captin and Cooney Joe to lead, are a hard crowd to manage, bet your life."

"There was one of your men with us in this fight," said Napope, looking about him for Tom Bantry. "But I do not see him now."

"Who was he?" demanded Garrett, glancing over the party hastily. "Was it the one we call Tom?"

Napope nodded, and Garrett uttered an oath, and a search was commenced for him. He was not among the dead or wounded, and whether he had perished or not, Bantry was not to be found.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEFENSE OF THE ISLAND.

WHEN the enemy had been so scattered as to leave the path free, the small band of rangers plunged deeper into the woods and kept on their course until they reached a small

wooded swamp through which many small creeks ran, leaving a little island in the center, containing, perhaps, two acres of land. The tall trees stood thick about it, and no better place of defense could possibly have been selected. No sooner had they reached the island than they set to work fortifying it by piling up fallen logs into a temporary barricade, making it strongest upon the only point which could be assailed by land, as the creeks swept around it on three sides, leaving a space of smooth ground about twenty feet wide. Across this they built a strong barricade at least ten feet high, through the openings of which, they could fire upon the foe, without being themselves seen.

The other parts of the island were almost impervious to assault, for not only did the deep creek guard it, but the logs had fallen all about it in inextricable confusion, making a *cherau de frise* through which a corps of axmen would have found it extremely difficult to force their way. The middle of the island was cleared, leaving the path open for them to pass from one part to another, and they now waited almost eagerly for the coming of the enemy, who, as yet, did not appear. Cooney Joe took his rifle and stole out toward the clearing, and for half an hour the "scout" remained quiet, waiting in considerable anxiety for the coming of the hunter, whose danger they well knew. But he came back at a long-loping trot, his rifle at a trail, and his eyes flashing with the ardor of battle.

"Git ready, boys," he cried. "We've got business afore us, bet yer life."

"What now, Joe?" demanded the captain. "Who are coming?"

"All that's left of Napope's band and thirty of Dick Garrett's men," replied Joe. "And—"

"Thar's an Injin," cried one of the men. "I'll pop him over."

"Hold on," replied Joe. "Seems to me that chap is making signals that look white. Thar; look at that!"

An Indian had appeared in plain sight and was waving a white cloth in the air.

"Hello, you!" yelled Joe. "Come in, ef you want to."

The man obeyed and came clambering over the barricade, and at a glance they could see that he was a white man disguised. It was Tom Bantry, who had escaped from associates with whom he could no longer consort.

"Look here, men," he said. "I'm Tom Bantry. You don't know me and mebbe you don't want to. I've been one of Dick Garrett and Will Jackwood's men—I have. Now why don't you kill me?"

"Don't see my way to that clear," said Joe. "Now, Tom Bantry, what d'ye want here?"

"I've quit 'em," replied Tom, energetically. "I couldn't stand it, boys, 'pon my word, I couldn't. I feel mean as dirt 'cause I've been with 'em so long; but I tell you I didn't think they was so mean till last night when they killed poor Mr. Wescott."

"What's that you say?" cried Melton, coming forward. "Who killed him; how was he killed?"

"Dick Garrett did it," replied Tom, in a choking voice. "The 'square give him some cheek, and he hid him throwed into the river. Boys, I'm a rough boatman, but I jumped in after him, and they left us alone in the dark on the river. I tried to save him, but it wan't no use; the current took him under."

"I believe this man, for one," said Melton. "He never would dare to come here with such a tale as that unless it was really true. What do you say, boys?"

"He's all right," replied Joe, "but ef he ain't, let him look out, 'cause I shoot awful close, odd times; I do, by gracious. So Dick Garrett is jined with Napope?"

"That ain't all, you know," said Tom Bantry. "They hev sent off a messenger to the village, and if you don't have lively times round here, then I don't want a picayune."

"Perhaps we had better retreat."

"You can't do it; they've got scouts all through the woods, and you'd hev the hull posse on your backs in twenty minnis by the clock, so don't try that on, 'square. No, it's goin' to be a b'ar-fight, and you can't find a better place than this to fight in."

"I believe the man is right," said Melton. "I say, Folks, is your land so bad you can't pull a trigger?"

"Sorry to say 'tis, Cap," replied the man; "I can't do nothing."

He had been hit in the hand during the fight that morning, and the cords had been so injured as to make it impossible for him to fire a rifle.

"Then you may as well let this man have your rifle, Folks," said the captain. "I take it for granted you mean to fight?"

"Stranger, I've got to fight," said Bantry. "Why, if Dick Garrett gets me, he'll raise my wool, sure, and so, if he does git into this camp, I'm goin' out feet fust. That's the way to talk it."

"He knows you have turned against him, then?"

"Captin, he suspects it, and to suspect a man is all he wants, you know. He'll go for me, sure."

The man who had been hurt came up at this moment and gave Bantry the rifle and ammunition.

"Now, 'square, see here," he said; "you watch me when I fire the first shot, and if it don't seem to you that I've tried to hit my man, I give you leave to shoot me, that's all. This is a good rifle, chummy—she hangs true as a die, and I can knock the black out of a biffle's eye at twenty rods with her."

At this moment one of the sentries outside the barricade gave the signal, and all were immediately upon the alert. Melton took the charge of Bantry upon himself, and gave him a place in the middle of the barricade, and took his station beside him. The sentries came stealing in like silent specters, and placed themselves beside the rest in silence, waiting for the advance of the Indians.

They had not long to wait, for a tufted head was cautiously protruded from behind a tree, and a pair of brilliant eyes looked keenly at the island. Evidently he saw something out of the way, for he stepped out in full view of the fort and advanced to within twenty feet of the barricade.

"That man must not go back," said Melton, in a whisper, touching Tom Bantry on the arm, "and no rifle must be fired. Can you fetch him?"

Bantry caught up a knife and hatchet, and sprung from the barricade so suddenly that the Indian had no time to cock

his gun before the fiery beatman was upon him. They closed with fierce energy, a short struggle ensued, and then Tom Bantry arose, leaving the Indian dead at his feet.

"Well done, Bantry," said Melton, as the man came back his face scarcely flushed by the desperate struggle in which he had been engaged. "You will do very well without watching."

"I've got to fight," replied Tom, coolly. "It won't do for me to be caught, I tell you."

By this time the Indians and disguised boatmen began to show themselves through the woods, and the scout opened upon them at once, and they skulked to the shelter of the bushes. But the men who had come up with the desperado Garrett did not know the word fear, and only waited for the orders of their superior to advance to the assault.

"They are fighting chickens, Cap; game birds, every man, now you mind what I say," said the deserter. "They'll fight like bulldogs, but they'd do better if Black Will was here."

The attack was not long delayed. The desperate Russians collected as close as possible to the barricade, and then made their rush all together. They were met by men as determined and desperate as themselves, and forced back, leaving one fourth of their number dead or wounded in front of the barricade.

"That's the way Melton's scouts do it," cried the voice of the young captain. "Come again, my boys."

"I hear you," screamed Garrett, "and we will come again. Now, Napope," he added, lowering his tone, "we must divide their force. Send ten of your best men to cross the creek and attack them on the right. Send ten more to the left, and try them at the same time. The signal will be three rifle-shots from this point."

Their movements were not so well shrouded that Melton could not see the danger to be apprehended from a division of his forces, which was rendered necessary by this action on their part. But he only sent three men to each point threatened, one under the lead of Tom Bantry, who had already become quite popular, and the other under Cooney Joe. They darted rapidly across the little open space, while the others

loaded their rifles and pistols and calmly waited for the assault.

"Beat them off this time, and the chances are they won't want any more," cried Melton. "Shoot a little closer to make up for the lost men, and it will be all right."

Just then they heard three rifle-shots, and a simultaneous movement was made against the island from three different points. But the foresight of Melton in sending small parties to the threatened points, removed the danger from the two parties of Indians, while his own force was not so weakened but that he could still present a stout front to the foe. The barricade rained bullets upon the advancing enemy entangled in the branches of the trees which formed the intrenchment, and crowded into the narrow space of twenty feet. No men, however hardy, could hope to live long under such a fire, and in spite of the almost superhuman exertions of Garrett, Napope and Na-she-eschuck, they fell back again, and took breath under cover of the woods.

"This is awful," said Garrett. "The curse of the devil on them, how they do fight. I've lost near half my men."

The small parties under Tom Bantry and Joe had succeeded in keeping their enemies at bay, and as soon as the main body retreated, half a dozen men ran to their aid, and the Indians were quickly swept away from the banks of the creek.

"Good boys," said Melton. "You could not fight better if you liked the sport. Now, who wants the doctor?"

No one had been badly injured. Two or three had been scraped by passing bullets, but a little sticking plaster soon set that right, and they were as ready for a fight as ever."

Garrett was furious, and while he was blaming heaven and earth at the ill success of his attack, a man whose face was flushed by a hard ride dashed through the swamp, and drew up before them.

"Now then, what is all this?" he cried. "I know you, Dick Garrett. You delight in a row so much that you are wasting my men in attacking a perfect fort."

"But you don't know who is in it, Will Jackwood," replied Garrett. "Two men you hate—Cooney Joe and Captain Melton."

"Ha, say you so? Then out of that they must come, by the Eternal! Keep back the men, for Black-Hawk will be here in half an hour with four hundred braves, and then we will overwhelm them. Captain Melton, eh? I always did detest that boy, Dick."

"I don't love him," said Dick.

"What is this I hear about Sam Wescott?"

"Gone under, Will. I had to do it, for he recognized me in my disguise, and some one had to go."

"I don't care so much about that, if you did not compromise me. The man hated me, and while he lived there was no hope of winning the girl by fair means, and I always liked that way best. Where is the girl?"

"I left her on the edge of the swamp, with three of my best men."

"All right; where is Tom Bantry? I want to send him somewhere."

"I don't know what to think about him, Will, 'pon my word. When we slung Wescott overboard the fool jumped after him, and I left them both in the river. Tom got out, some way, and came to Napope's camp, but after their fight we could not find hide nor hair of him."

"You've lost the best man in the party, then, by all odds. Tom was the only one who had a spark of humanity in his composition. You are sure these men you left with the girl are all right?"

"Davis, Bradshaw and Herrick."

"They'll do; as true panthers as ever lapped blood. How many has Melton in his fort?"

"He had twenty."

"Then he's got twenty now," said Jackwood. "You have hurt many of them in that place, for the captain knows how to choose a position. Send one of the Indians to Black-Hawk, and tell him to make haste, as we must get this little job off our hands."

"If you find it a little job, then there are no snakes in the South Red," said Garrett, who was incensed at the quiet way in which his defeat was laughed down. "They licked Napope alone, and now they've licked our combined forces, and it is no two to one they don't give our friend Black-Hawk

all he can do. You ought to know Melton's scouts by this time."

Jackwood nodded, and a fierce look came into his face:

"If I had been here, friend Garrett, this would never have happened. If I had assailed these works, I would have taken them."

"Then assail them now. You've got the men—try it."

"Dick—Dick! How lucky it is that all men are not swayed by impulse. You offer me a broken and discouraged force to perform the task you failed to achieve when they were in prime order. It won't do, Richard; too transparent altogether. Get the men together, see to the wounded and get the survivors ready for a new attack. I will lead it in person."

As he spoke, the approach of dusky scouts heralded the coming of Black-Hawk, and directly after the old chief, surrounded by his principal advisers and warriors, strode into the camp.

CHAPTER X.

THE FOREST FIEND.

WILL JACKWOOD, whose influence over the old chief had now become great, at once accosted him.

"The time has come, chief of the Sacs, when you may put forth your hand and take that which is your own, the band of men who have braved the power of Napope and his strongest men, and have even baffled my warriors. They laugh at us in yonder fort; let us teach them what we can do."

"My brother speaks good words," replied the chief. "Let those who have axes go forward and fell trees about the fort upon every side so that we may cross the creek. Let others take their guns and protect them."

A cordon of axmen was quickly formed, about the island, and the great trees came crashing down, forming bridges over which the great force of warriors could rush

this to the attack. The work was quickly done, and then at the command of the chief four hundred warriors rushed on together, uttering their fearful war-cries. They broke through the abatis of tangled limbs unopposed and reached the fort only to find it tenantless. The white rangers had escaped, how they could not tell, leaving nothing to show where they had departed, but all knew that it must have been in the interval of time which elapsed between the last attack on the fort and the coming of Black-Hawk. Black Will was nearly beside himself with anger, and a pursuit was at once commenced, when the trail was found. But, the "scout" had half an hour's start, and he feared that they would reach the river before they could be overtaken, and their leader's fertile brain would quickly study out some way of crossing the stream.

Although having but little hope, Black-Hawk sent out a hundred of the best Sac warriors under the command of Ma-she-eschuck, and the pursuit was pressed with ardor. While this was being done, Jackwood sent Garrett with five men to find Sadie, and conduct her to a place of safety, strictly enjoining him to use her well but upon no account to suffer her to escape.

Dick Garrett hurried his men to the spot where he had left Sadie, and as he approached it his countenance began to change for he heard nothing of the men he had left in charge of the girl.

"Hurry up, boys," he cried; "if they have lost her, I'll not be the man to go back to Black Will Jackwood and tell him of it. Ha! Look at that."

The three men who had been left with Sadie lay upon the earth under the shadow of the trees. Their faces were upturned to the sky, and it needed no prophet to tell that they were dead, and the party broke into a run and reached the spot. Two of them had been shot through the heart, evidently with pistol balls, and the third had half a dozen knife wounds upon him, and they saw on every hand evidences of a desperate struggle, while Sadie was nowhere to be seen. The men paused and looked at each other in unspeakable dismay, for they knew Jackwood too well to dare face him, and tell him what had happened.

"He'd kill me!" screamed Garrett. "Look here, boys; we've got to find this girl before we go back, so take the trail at once, and follow. We'll have her back, if she is above ground, and avenge these poor fellows who lie dead! I only wish we had Tom Bantry now; he was the best scout among us."

"What made you leave him in the river then?" said one of the men, in a sullen tone. "He won't come back no more, Tom won't, and like enuff he'll turn against us."

"Don't be mutinous, Tracey," said Garrett, turning a dark look upon the speaker. "You know *me*, and you know I never waste words. Be mighty careful; *I* would, if I was you."

The man understood the deadly threat implied in the words of his leader, and turned away muttering to himself.

"Now Jack Fish," said Dick, addressing himself to another of the party, "if Tracey has done growling, you take the trail. 'Tain't likely that a young and tender girl can keep away from us long."

The man addressed came forward, and waving the others back began to examine the earth to find the imprint of Sadie's feet. It was not long before he announced that he had found it, and that it was covered by another trail, that of a man in moccasins, who was apparently following her, and from the length of the step he should say they were running.

"That looks as if she was afraid of the critter," said Garrett. "Who can it be that is brave enough to attack these men, shoot two and kill the third with a knife and get off so easily? Now, I'll tell you what I make of this, boys. When this man, whoever he is, shot down two of the boys and rushed in on Davis with the knife, the girl was scared and put out for the woods. When he had finished Davis—and he didn't do it easy—he went after her, and like as not he hasn't caught her yet. Take the trail, Jack, but have your weapons handy."

It was yet early in the afternoon and the trail was plain, as no attempt had been made to cover it. They went on at a trot, Jack Fish in advance, closely followed by Garrett and

the rest, and the course led them deep into the woods to the right of the position which had been so nobly held by Melton's scout. Sadie was used to exercise in the open air and was evidently leading her pursuer a desperate chase, using every artifice to throw him from the trail. Garret was dumfounded, for he could not understand why she should fly from one who had slain her enemies, but they followed the trail, hoping every moment to overtake the man who was in chase of Sadie. All at once, Jack Fish, who still held the advance, stopped and lifted his hand, with a low cry.

"See here, Dick, this gal is cute, you bet. She has throwed him off the trail as sure as shootin'. Thar's no track but his'n here."

Dick eagerly inspected the trail and was forced to arrive at the same conclusion.

"Turn back, then," he cried. "We will find which way she has gone and follow. I will take the trail on one side and you on the other and we will soon pick it up again."

They had not gone back twenty paces when Jack Fish stopped beside a clump of thick bushes which grew close to the path, and stooping, looked under them.

"I've found it, boys. She crept under the bushes here and got away from him; follow me."

He passed through the bushes, parting them carefully, and upon the other side found the trail clearly defined and leading at a right angle from the course they had been following.

"She's smart," said Garrett, admiringly. "I don't know as I blame Will for liking her, after all. She has beaten this fellow well, and as we don't want any thing from him just now, we'll follow the girl."

They kept on swiftly, for Jack announced that Sadie was fatigued at this point and was no longer running. Soon after they reached a place where, worn out by fatigue, she had seated herself upon a bank and rested for a little time. From this point the trail became erratic, and she was evidently wandering up and down seeking for some course out of the woods, and the night found them still upon the trail and they camped for the night determined to take the trail again at early morning.

"And we'll run her to earth before nine o'clock, you mark my words," said Garrett. "Lucky for you I am your leader, or you would have gone back to meet Will Jackwood."

"Not if I knows it," said Tracey. "Will Jackwood never sees me again if we don't find her in the morning. Now I think of it, where is the Indian girl?"

"I never thought of her," said Garrett. "Can it be possible that *she* killed the men?"

"Oh, bosh ; she only had a bow and arrows and it took a strong man to harness Joel Davis. I'll be cussed if I understand it at all. Say, Jack, did you see any thing of the Indian girl's trail?"

"She went another way from the camp, on a run too. It must have been some awful looking critter that tackled Joel Davis, to skeer the girls so."

"You are right," said Garrett. "Now then, as Jack has worked hard and we want him to lead again to-morrow, Tracey will keep camp for two hours and the rest of you as you can agree, until morning. I'm going to have a snooze, myself."

He wrapped himself in a blanket and threw himself down at the foot of a tree, while the rest in a discontented manner drew lots for the choice of the hours of watching. After this had been settled the lucky ones took their blankets and lay down, while Tracey lighted his pipe, moved out a short distance in the darkness and sat down to watch. The man was sullen, and had not yet got over his little brush with Garrett upon the fate of Tom Bantry, and he muttered to himself about the pride of rank which enabled Garrett to sleep, while he was forced to watch.

They built no fire, for it was a clear summer night and even the blankets were scarcely needed. Tracey's pipe glowed through the night, showing those of his companions who yet slept, where he sat in the shadow. After a time the man began to doze, and did not see the dark figure that crawled slowly toward him until it stood erect against the trunk of the tree against which he was seated. A moment after, a long arm was stretched out and clutched his throat in so fell a clasp that it seemed to collapse beneath the pressure, and in a moment more he lay without a struggle or a groan supine beneath the tree ?

The strange being who had done the work, bent over the insensible form and was busy about something for a short time, and then taking up the pipe which Tracey had dropped and which had not been extinguished, he sat down near the body of the fallen renegade and began to smoke, first picking up the cap of his victim and placing it upon his head, glancing now and then at the sleeping camp. When the pipe was smoked out he arose and stole softly to the side of Dick Garrett and looked down into his face.

The moonlight shone full upon him, and showed a horrible figure of gigantic mold, covered from head to foot with a hairy substance, while the eyes looked fiercely from his shaggy eyebrows upon the sleeping Russian. His attitude was menacing, and once or twice the right hand dropped to a hairy girdle about his waist, as if to draw a huge knife which was suspended there, but upon second thought he seemed to change his mind, and gathering up the rifles of the party, he carried them a little distance into the woods, and returned this time to take away the knives and pistols, most of which were thrown together in a heap, at the place where the rifles had been stacked. Some of the villains had their small-arms upon their persons, but these the intruder did not attempt to touch, and waving his hands triumphantly above his head, he bounded into the thicket, and was seen no more.

Daylight came and they began to yawn and stretch themselves, those who ought to have gone upon guard long before, looking mystified at being allowed to sleep until morning.

"Tracey went to sleep, that's all," said Garrett. "Go and kick the brute, somebody. There is no telling what might have happened through his cussed carelessness."

One of the men sprung to the spot where the recumbent figure of Tracey was seen, and had actually drawn back his foot to kick him, when he saw that his hands were tightly bound, and a gag thrust into his mouth. His cry of astonishment awoke the rest, and they quickly surrounded their fallen comrade, relieved him of the ligatures, and helped him to arise. The eyes of the man were rolling fearfully, and he gasped for breath.

"Ho!" he said, at last. "A pretty set of fellows you are,

to let a man stay in that way all night. Dunderheads—sleepers—ten thousand curses on your heads!"

"Steady, Tracey," said Garrett. "What does this mean?"

"It means you are a lot of lazy thieves, or you would have found this out four hours ago."

"Who did it?"

"How do I know? I was sitting there smoking my pipe, when I felt a great hairy hand upon my throat, and I was choking. Then I lost my senses, and when I came to myself, I was lying here, anchored to the tree, and unable to move hand or foot."

"Why didn't you sing out?"

"Why didn't I fly?" retorted Tracey, angrily. "I wouldn't be a fool if I were you, Dick Garrett. Oh, curse the hand, whoever it was. Where's my rifle?"

The question naturally drew their attention to their own weapons, and as they noted the loss, curses both loud and deep were vented upon the head of the being who had done this injury to them. Garrett actually foamed at the mouth in his anger, and ran in a frantic manner up and down the camp, cursing Tracey, their unknown enemy, any thing and every thing under the sun, in no measured terms.

"That's it," said Tracey. "Curse your own sleepy heads, and let me alone."

"Look for sign, Jack Fish," said Garrett, turning to their trailer. "Tell me who has done this?"

"It's the same man that killed the boys, and then followed Miss Sadie," said Jack. "Hyar's his trail, plain as writing, and I'll be cussed if it don't beat me to tell whether he's man or beast."

"He shall not beat me," hissed Dick Garrett. "Take the trail of the girl and follow, for we'll have her now, rifles or no rifles."

The trailer obeyed without a word, and they started out upon the trail. But, as they emerged from the woods and entered a great clearing, every man paused in alarm, for there, just in front, and covering them with one of their own rifles, while the rest lay at his feet, stood the hairy monster who had stolen in upon their camp the night before.

"Stop!" he cried, in a hoarse, unnatural voice. "For your lives, stop. Move hand or foot and you are dead!"

They halted, and stood facing the leveled tube, trembling in every joint, while the fierce eyes, glancing along the brown barrel, held them enthralled.

CHAPTER XI.

BLACK-HAWK KEEPS HIS WORD.

We left Sadie in charge of those desperadoes, while the battle in the swamp was progressing. They were sulky at not being allowed to take part in the fight, and only returned gruff answers to her questions, while keeping a strict watch upon the girls.

They stood under a great tree, whose spreading branches, loaded with foliage, were impenetrable to the eye, and would have formed a secure hiding-place, and none of them saw the long, hairy arm extended, until a double report stretched two of the guards dead upon the sod. Then came a rustling sound, and the gigantic being, who afterward appeared to the men of Garrett in the woods, bounded from the tree, holding in his hand a gleaming knife. With a scream of horror, Sadie fled into the forest, and Minneoba, believing that she saw a demon of the lower world, also turned in flight, but paused upon the edge of the woods, and looked back to see a fearful duel between the man named Davis and the strange being who sprung from the tree. They seemed to be complete masters of their weapons, and for a moment the issue seemed doubtful, but the gigantic strength of the unknown prevailed, and Davis fell, covered with many wounds. The victor stood erect, and seeing that Sadie had fled, uttered a hoarse cry, and fixing his eyes upon her trail, bounded away in pursuit. Minneoba, like all Indian girls, was superstitious, and believed that it would be death to follow the wild being into the woods, and turning, hurried on toward Black-Hawk's camp, intending to ask aid from him in the recovery of her

friend. Sadie, in the mean time, had put all the distance she could between herself and the hideous being who had assailed her guards, and was hurried in her flight by hearing his deep voice crying out after her, as she rushed on

She tried every trick of wood-craft which she had learned from her father—who was a skillful scout—when she became certain that the horrible creature was really in pursuit. How she finally eluded him by creeping beneath the bushes, and then turning away from the course she had been pursuing, we have before seen, and late in the afternoon she found herself in the midst of a deep forest, pathless as the sea, not knowing which way to turn. She was alone—alone in the depths of that untrodden wilderness, the haunt of wild beasts and the hunter who followed them, without a weapon or guide. Never, perhaps, was a tenderly-nurtured woman placed in so strange a situation before. Look which way she would, there seemed to be no hope of succor. Strange sights and sounds were heard, slimy snakes crept softly over the leaves, great birds flitted through the branches, and she heard the cry of the wildcat and panther in the distance. Weary and hopeless, she sunk down upon a mossy knoll, and almost wished she had not fled from the monster who followed her. But it would not do to remain there, and she rose and staggered on her way, hoping against hope that something would happen to give her aid.

She was nearly famished, and coming upon a place where the succulent bulb known as the “ground-nut” grew in profusion, she set to work and dug up the bulbs with her fingers, following the white stems in their various turnings among the roots until she found the article she sought. It took a long time to satisfy her hunger, as the nuts were not larger than rifle ball, and were hard to find, and then she began to look about for a place of rest, as it would soon be dark. She reached a great opening, in the center of which a huge pile of logs and brush was heaped, and removing some of these, made a couch for herself among the branches, drew others over her head, and resigned herself to an All protecting Power. Even in times of difficulty and danger sleep will come to the weary, and she lost consciousness, and no longer feared her enemies. Morning came and found the sweet girl

still sleeping, when she was suddenly aroused by a harsh voice crying out a deadly menace, and peeping from her place of concealment, saw the Forest Fiend facing the knot of helpless scoundrels under the leadership of Dick Garrett.

"It is a man, after all," she murmured. "Perhaps I would have done better to have let him overtake me, for it seems he fights against these villains. Perhaps he is mad, poor creature!"

"Let's make a rush on him altogether, boys," whispered Garrett. "Curse it, five men ought to whip one."

"But he's got the rifles, the critter," whined Tracey. "I tell you that if you had been in his grip once, you wouldn't be so ready to try him again. He's got a hold like an iron vice, that devil has."

"Don't try to run," cried the Forest Fiend. "It will not be safe; he who flies first, dies first!"

"What do you want from us?" screamed Garrett. "Do you know who I am, curse you?"

"I know you," replied the strange being wildly. "You are a murderer and a robber, and deserve death for a hundred crimes. Why don't you come on? what are you afraid of? You tremble at the sight of the Forest Fiend, murderer that you are."

"Won't you back me, boys?" hissed Garrett; "I tell you I'll be the first to rush at him, if you will agree to follow."

"He can kill three of us before we get within striking distance," replied Jack Fish. "I guess we had better give up boys; maybe he'll let us off."

Garrett heard what he said, and thrusting his hand into the bosom of his hunting-shirt, drew a long double-barreled pistol, his eyes gleaming with rage.

"You'd turn traitor, would you?" he screamed. "Now see here, rush on that devil, you and Tracey, or I shoot you where you stand."

"Don't do it, Dick," pleaded Jack Fish, dropping on his knees. "I'll fight any thing human, but not that dreadful creature. Don't force us on him, for the love of God."

"I'll do it," replied Garrett, fiercely. "Up and at him, you base hounds; up, I say!"

Goaded on by fear of the weapon of their leader, the men

sprung on, catching up clubs as they ran. But when they had gained a hundred feet from the weapon of Garrett, and where it would scarcely reach them, they threw up their hands in token of submission, and fell upon their faces. The Forest Fiend fired over them, and a man who stood at Garrett's elbow fell, shot through the heart. The others, who had each a pistol, seeing that nothing was to be gained by flight, rushed at the immovable figure of their enemy, who caught up another weapon and fired again, killing the foremost man. Garrett saw that there was no hope, and calling to the last man, sprung toward the thicket. Hearing the crack of the rifle, he turned back and saw his friend fall, while the stern executioner caught up another rifle and leveled it. As the bullet sped, Garrett sprung into the air and fell upon his face, just as Jack Fish and Tracey, who had taken advantage of their opportunity, reached the thicket in safety.

Their terrible adversary sprung toward the fallen leader without waiting to reload his weapon or take up a new one, but to his rage Garrett uttered a loud laugh of derision and sprung to his feet, and the next moment the leaves concealed him from view. He had been "playing 'possum," and was not hurt in the least, as he had managed to fall just in time to escape the well-aimed bullet. The Forest Fiend darted back for a rifle, but he was a moment too late, although he fired into the thicket, and then, snatching up a powder-horn and bullet-pouch, darted away in pursuit.

The moment he was gone Sadie came out of her place of concealment, selected a rifle and ammunition from the heap, and hurried away, glad of the opportunity to get out of a dangerous neighborhood. She could not control her fear of the strange being who had come to her aid so opportunely, and continued her flight until she felt safe from pursuit, and then sat down, panting, loaded the rifle which she had taken, and prepared to defend herself from any assault.

"Who and what is that wonderful being?" she murmured. "How brave he is; how little he cared for that gang of desperate scoundrels, who were doubtless in pursuit of us! Oh, I hope he may overtake Richard Garrett and

avenge the murder of my poor father! Melton, where are you? Have you fallen a victim to these base wretches who regard human life as a plaything? God forbid!"

As she was rising to proceed upon her way she heard a slight rustle among the bushes, and grasping her rifle turned in the direction of the sound. But she dropped the weapon with a cry of delight, for the bushes parted and Minneoba suddenly appeared and ran to her white sister, clasping her in her arms.

"Sadie, my sister," she said, softly kissing her again and again. "The heart of Minneoba has been very sad. She feared that the evil demon of the woods had destroyed the Wild Rose, and that her poor Indian sister would never see the face she loved again."

If Minneoba was delighted, how much greater was the joy of Sadie, who could now hope to escape from the toils of her enemies, for she knew that the forest was to the Indian girl as easy to tread as a ball-room floor for her. She returned the caresses showered upon her, and for a moment the two girls forgot that aught of evil or danger hung over them.

"I have been to my father's camp," said Minneoba, "and many warriors are searching for you. Black-Hawk loves the Wild Rose for her father's sake, and will give her a shelter. His heart is very sad because the men of Garrett have killed the good white man, but what can he do? The war has commenced and the warriors would say he had turned woman if he was angry at the death of a white man. Let us go."

The two girls set out together, threading the mazes of the forest with an ease which only a forest life could impart, the Indian girl taking the advance, and chatting merrily with her companion as she proceeded. They had not gone far when they were met by two warriors, who expressed their satisfaction in their peculiar manner, and at once led the way to the river, which was not far away, and where a canoe was waiting in which they descended the stream, a distance of about three miles, landed upon a green point, and assisted Sadie to leave the canoe, which was then carefully concealed by leaves and brush. This done the war-

riors again led the way, the two girls following, and they came suddenly upon a great camp of the Indians. More than four hundred people, principally fighting braves, although there was a small number of women and children, were resting in the beautiful glade, most of them engaged in cleaning their weapons and getting ready for the battle which was to come. Black-Hawk and Will Jackwood were conversing together apart from the rest, and the latter started forward with a look of delight as he saw Sadie, and advanced at once, closely followed by Black Hawk.

"Welcome to the Indian camp, Sadie," said Jackwood, endeavoring to take her hand. "You can not tell how unhappy I have been since I knew that you were lost."

She took no notice of his extended hand, but went on to meet Black-Hawk, who greeted her kindly.

"Let the Wild Rose rest under the shelter of a Sac lodge," he said. "Black-Hawk has been driven from the places he loved by the white men, but he can not forget that there are just white men, who would not do a wrong to the simple Indian. Such a man was the father of the Wild Rose."

"Black-Hawk," said Sadie, as she took the proffered hand, "when my father drove away the bad men who sought your life, you promised to be a friend to us. Now the time has come for you to keep your word."

"Black-Hawk is not a white man, to speak with a double tongue. What he has spoken—he *has* spoken. Let the Wild Rose ask what she will from Black-Hawk, and if it is in his power, she shall have what she asks."

"My father is dead," she said, mournfully. "The bad men who follow William Jackwood, killed him because he would not kneel to them or beg for his life. Now, Jackwood follows me and I fear him, and I ask the protection of the great chief from this bad man."

"Has the son of Red-Bird lied to me?" cried Black-Hawk, sternly. "He told me that the Wild Rose loved him and would come into his lodge gladly."

"He has lied," she answered. "He knows that I hate him above all men on earth, and that I would die sooner than permit myself to be his wife."

"Be careful, girl," hissed Jackwood. "You will raise a tempest which you can not quell, if you do not look out."

"I have no fear of the result. Any thing would be preferable to a union with such a wretch as you are."

"Look you, Black-Hawk," cried Jackwood, turning fiercely upon the chief. "When I agreed to aid you, remember that I told you that this girl must be mine and you promised that I should have my will."

"That was when Black-Hawk believed that the Wild Rose loved you," replied Black-Hawk. "She has asked for my protection and it is given. Let the son of Red-Bird seek another mate; the Wild Rose is not for him."

A tempest of furious passions raged in the heart of William Jackwood. At any other time or place he would have shot the old chief down without any remorse, and even here, in the midst of his warriors, he was tempted to do it, even at the risk of his own life. With a mighty effort he restrained himself, and turned away with a malevolent glance at Sadie, which she returned by one of defiance.

Several of the principal braves were looking on, and there was some murmuring, for these men recognized the good old maxim—"to the victor belong the spoils." While they stood thus, there was heard a triumphant shout upon the river, and several men started away to see what it meant. They were soon heard coming back, and directly after a compact body of men, those who followed Will Jackwood, poured into the camp, leading in their midst, as prisoners, Captain Melton, Cooney Joe and Tom Bantry. A look of ferocious joy beamed upon the face of Will Jackwood, for he saw a chance for revenge.

CHAPTER XII.

SADIE'S SACRIFICE.

THE prisoners marched firmly, and not a cheek blanched, as they saw where they were led and realized the fearful danger in which they stood. Will Jackwood started forward and addressed one of his subordinates, who, for the time being, had been in command of the band.

"Did you take them, Justin? If you can say that you did so without aid from the Indians, then you may ask any thing you like at my hands."

"Nary re'l," replied the man. "We caught them crossing the river in a canoe, and pounced on 'em almost before they could lift a hand, but that Cooney Joe laid out Jack Ferguson, and Saul Sloan has got a bad wound in the shoulder, from Melton's knife. Is that satisfactory?"

"Excellent! Black-Hawk, I claim these prisoners as my own, as my men took them without help."

"They are yours," replied Black-Hawk. "An Indian chief knows how to be just."

"Now then, Captain Charles Melton, you are in my power; do you understand, in my power! You shall rue the day when you dared come between me and the woman I love."

"What do you mean, renegade?" replied the young scout. "I never wronged you in my life."

"Perhaps; we shall see how it turns out. Keep them safe, boys; set a double guard upon them, and for your lives, let none escape. Ah, my good, valiant, chivalric Joe, how you will repent having raised your hand against me."

"I do repent, Will," said Joe, quietly. "I repent most awfully. I ought to have lifted yer ha'r on the spot, by gracious. 'Twould have served yo' just right, and saved a good deal of trouble."

"Take them away, boys, take them away. Ha; don't let the girl speak to them or she will contrive some way to set

them free. Look out for Minneoba above all others, for she is as cute as the devil. Miss Sadie, do I deceive myself when I think that you will not now disdain to hold some conversation with me?"

"What do you wish to say to me, sir?" replied Sadie, who saw the dreadful peril of her friends, and wished to save them if possible.

"Say to Black-Hawk that you wish to speak to me apart from the rest and he will give you permission. I see a way in which you can save these men."

She spoke to the chief, who nodded kindly, and she followed Black Will a little distance from the camp.

"That is far enough," she said, pausing under a great tree. "What have you to say to me?"

"Change your way of speaking; be more complaisant to me, my dear girl, for the more kindly you use me the better it will be for yonder men who are doomed beyond hope if I so much as lift a finger. First of all—do you love this Captain Melton?"

"He has never spoken to me," replied Sadie. "How do I know that he cares for me?"

"That is not the question at issue. Do you love him? That is what I asked."

"How can I answer that, when I do not know my own heart? He is a brave and good man, and I could love him dearly if he loved me as well. I will say no more upon that point."

"At least, you care enough for him to wish to save his life?"

"Yes—yes; I would do almost any thing for that," she replied, eagerly.

"It has gone as far as that, has it? My dear girl, you are further gone than you imagined. Now, I do not wish to be incumbered by prisoners. If we can not come to terms, I shall find it necessary to put these fellows out of the way, and shall certainly do so. There are many ways in which to do this, and my friends the Indians will doubtless be happy to take the laboring oar out of my hands."

"Do you mean that you would be base enough to give them up to the torture?" she cried.

"Undoubtedly, my Indian friends might find it in their hearts to burn them if they only had them. I was present at a spectacle of this kind, the other day, where they barbecued a traitorous Indian. It was not pretty, and I may say did not amuse me after the first gush, and I went so far as to kill the poor fellow with my own hand, to put him out of his pain. It would distress me very much to see any of your friends in a like delicate situation."

"What do you ask of me, William Jackwood? Do you wish to drive me mad? You could not—*could* not be so base."

"I would do any thing for revenge," replied the man, hoarsely. "I tell you, upon my honor as a man, that if you do not promise to be my wife—I know that you will keep your word—these men shall all die as I have said. Make that promise, and upon the day when you become my wife, all shall be set free except one."

"Which one do you mean?"

"Tom Bantry; he is a cursed traitor."

"That man must be saved, at all hazards," replied Sadie, firmly. "Of all your villainous band, William Jackwood, he alone showed a spark of pity when my unhappy father was cast into the furious flood, bound and helpless. What I would not do for love I will do for gratitude, and I give you my hand, if you will swear upon your honor that these men shall go free, and at once."

"You are sensible," he said, eagerly. "I had not hoped that you would yield so easily, and I will make it the study of my life to make you happy as—"

"Silence! Give me your promise and I will give you mine."

"I swear by the only things I hold pure—the memory of my mother and my love for you—that these men shall all be spared."

"And I promise to be your wife, if we both live. Oh, God, forgive me if I do wrong in this, but I can not see these brave men sacrificed, who have come into this deadly peril for my sake. William Jackwood, understand me fully, and do not say in the after times that I deceived you. I hate you—I shall always hate you—but I will be your wife."

"All right," said Jackwood, with a light laugh. "I will try to change your opinion of me when we are married. And now you are at liberty, and I will leave it to you to tell Black-Hawk that you have changed your mind, while I prepare to leave him. The chief has not used me well, and I do not fight the battles of those who do not treat me as a friend."

She went away with drooping head, and he stood in the same spot, moodily tapping his boot-leg with a small switch he carried. He was not fully satisfied, although he had gained the stake for which he had been playing so long. She had told him that she hated him, and had as good as said she loved Charles Melton, and yet had promised to be his wife. As he stood there, a man panting for breath and bleeding from several wounds, rushed up to him, and in his disfigured countenance he saw something which reminded him of Dick Garrett, and stopped him.

"Dick, what is the matter?"

"Played out!" replied Dick, dropping exhausted on the sod. "Give me some rum, for I am half dead."

Jackwood put his flask to the mouth of the exhausted man and he drank long and eagerly, and drew a deep breath of relief.

"Ah-h-h! That goes to the spot, Will. I've had a long run—chased by the devil's kid, and it's a mercy that I have got in alive. It all came of chasing that accursed girl, who got into the woods."

"It was not your fault, Dick," said Jackwood. "Minneoba came in and told us about it, and we sent out parties after her, and one of them picked her up."

"Take care of her yourself, after this," panted Dick. "I've seen the devil to-day, and sought him, and I don't want any more."

"Where are the rest of your men?"

"Gone under, I reckon. Jack Fish and Tracey got into the woods, and the rest are dead. I had to play 'possum, or I would have been cooked, too. Give me another drink, and I'll tell you about it."

Jackwood gave him the flask, and for a moment nothing was heard except the musical gurgle of the liquor. When he lowered it, a considerable vacuum existed in the vessel,

and he told the story of the chase after Sadie with many expletives not necessary to set down here. When he had finished the tale he did the same with the liquor, and stood up.

"You are wounded, Dick?"

"Nothing of much account. I've been cut and scratched in diving through the bushes, for that hairy cuss chased me almost into camp. I thought he'd never give it up."

"I don't know who or what it can be," said Jackwood, musingly, "and I don't care much. Go and wash the blood from your face, and then get the men together, for we must leave this camp. It is all up with Black-Hawk, for Atkinson has come with an army, and he will clean out the Indians in the twinkling of an eye."

Garrett moved away slowly, and Jackwood advanced to the side of Black-Hawk, who was talking with Sadie. She did not look at him as he came up, but Minneoba faced him boldly, with her pretty face showing the utmost anger and contempt.

"What has the son of Red-Bird said to frighten the Wild Rose?" she cried, angrily. "He is a coward and no brave."

"You had better send your daughter away, Black-Hawk," said Jackwood, quietly. "I have borne insults enough in this camp, and will not stay here."

"The son of Red-Bird promised to stay and fight for his red brothers," said Black-Hawk, reproachfully, "and when he sees the enemy in sight he runs away like a frightened hound. It is well; Black-Hawk would not have any except brave men follow him."

"It is false, Indian," cried Will Jackwood. "Here, in the midst of your wild band, I defy you to prove that while you were true to me, I failed to do my duty like a man. But when you dared to take away my prisoner, my wife that is to be, in that day I leave you, never to return."

"Go," replied Black-Hawk. "I have been deceived in the son of Red-Bird. His father died in the white man's prison, and now he basely turns away when the battle is nigh."

"Stay with me, Wild Rose," cried Minneoba. "My brother is a strong chief and will protect you from harm."

"I can not—I dare not," replied Sadie. "If I stay with you, my friends, who are his prisoners, must die."

"My father will take them away from him," said Minneoba, looking pleadingly at the old chief."

"Let him do so—let him make himself a dog, if he dares," replied Jackwood. "I will tell his baseness throughout the tribes, and not a man of them all dare look me in the face until I am righted."

The chief hung his head, for he had pledged his sacred word that Jackwood should keep his prisoners. The scoundrel knew his character too well to doubt for a moment that the Indian would keep his word, and let them go away with the prisoners. Minneoba plended in vain, and with loud lamenting, followed the compact force of Jackwood to the edge of the forest, and saw them go away with the prisoners, closely guarded, and Sadie walking by the side of William Jackwood, with a hard, bitter look upon her beautiful face. Garrett, who recovered quickly from every evil, turned about and blew a kiss at Minneoba, who at once fitted an arrow to the string, and would have sent it after him, but that he took shelter among the men, laughing.

"The world is all before us where to choose," boys," said Jackwood, "but one thing is certain, if this thing goes against the Indians, and of course it will, this territory won't be very healthy for us. What do you say?"

"We'll find a place to live, Cap," replied Garrett. "The world owes us a living, and we'll have it too, or else make trouble."

"Don't you think we had better find a hiding-place and see what is going to happen? There will be pretty pickings for us if the day should, by any chance, favor the Indians, even for a time."

"I know the place you mean, Cap," said Jack Fish, who had come in before they marched. "The neatest hiding-place in the West."

"How far away?"

"'Bout six mile, I reckon."

"Lead the way, then."

Fish took the advance, and Jackwood assisted the weary steps of Sadie over the rugged road before them. It led

through tangled thickets, under trees which had been the growth of centuries, and ended in a circular forest opening, so difficult to reach, that Black Will was obliged to carry Sadie in places, so worn out had she become.

The grass was green in the little glade, and the birds were singing, as one by one the troop came out from beneath the canopy of leaves, and gained a footing on the level turf.

"Jack Fish," said the renegade, "you have deserved well of your country. I could live here forever. Here we rest, until the thing is decided one way or another."

"How will we live?" queried Garrett.

"The woods are full of game, and we will kill it so far from the camp, that no one will suspect us of being here. Captain Melton, will you give me your word of honor not to try to escape, provided I free your arms?"

Melton was about to refuse, but catching Sadie's eye, he changed his mind, and made the required promise. It was not extended to Tom Bantry, and Cooney Joe, who were tightly bound, and placed under guard. Sadie was coming forward with the intention of speaking to Melton, when the bushes parted near her, and the face of the demon of the woods appeared, peeping out among the leaves.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUESTS NOT INVITED.

Sadie was not easily frightened, but it required the effort of all her resolution to keep her from uttering a cry of alarm. The young captain saw that she was deeply moved and ascribed it to her grief at the situation in which she found herself placed. But she recovered herself by a great effort of the will and came forward, giving her hand frankly to the man she loved and who loved her as dearly.

"I am deeply grieved that you have come into this danger for my sake, Charles," she said, softly. "But have no

fear, for I will save you at any hazard. Indeed, it is done already, for I have given my word and you are safe."

"Safe! What do you mean, Sadie; what promise have you given?"

"Do not be angry with me, Charles," she said, sadly. "I am sorry that it is forced upon me but—I have promised to be the wife of William Jackwood."

"Black Will! Gracious heaven, Sadie, it cannot be. What madness is his?"

"I was forced to do it. They threatened you and your brave companions with a horrible death. I had no one near to advise me and I could not—I could not see you die."

"You should have spoken to me first," he cried, wildly. "You knew that I loved you. I have never dared to tell you until now, and ought to have spoken. What is death to dishonor? What a life you have doomed yourself to bear, that I may live. I would sooner die a thousand deaths than bear this bitter burden."

"Charles!" she cried. "You make my load too heavy for me to bear. How could I see those who had incurred this peril for me, given up to satisfy the bloody passions of these desperate men. My father is dead—I am alone in the world and my life would have been a weary one at best, if I had refused to yield. He told me that if I was obstinate, I should stand by and see you suffer. I could not have borne that, at any rate."

"You should have remained in the camp of Black-Hawk, who is a brave man, although an Indian. My dear girl, I can not blame you for what you have done. It was in all kindness of heart, but it was wrong for you to yield. The lives of men who are ready at any time to die for the right should be as a feather's weight compared to your sacrifice. As I say, so would Joe Bent and Tom Bantry, who are more hated by these men than I am."

"Can you not escape?" she whispered. "But no—I forgot. My word is pledged to this bad man and that I hold sacred. But I shall not deem it a crime to take his life, and although he may claim my hand he shall never have a wife's duty from me—for I hate him—oh, how I hate him!"

The white teeth clicked together fiercely as she spoke,

and Black Will, who was listening, laughed a low, bitter laugh, full of malice.

"Sorry to interfere in a social meeting of this kind," he said, advancing, "but your language is disgusting to your future husband, my dear Sadie. Captain Melton, if I hear any more language of this kind from you, I shall have you bound and gagged, for I will not endure it."

"If you do that it absolves me from my promise, for you gave me your word to treat them well," said Sadie.

"I will not give you even that loop-hole from which to escape," said Black Will, after a pause. "I leave the camp to-day in search of a man who is at one of the Indian stations, a Lutheran missionary. Let me say to you that he is a man who would not perform the ceremony if you offer a word of objection, and that you have only to say 'no,' and that ceremony will cease and one of another kind commence, for as there is a sky above us I will take your friends out and hang them before your eyes. Git my horse, Jack Fish."

The man obeyed, and after giving some orders to Dick Garrett in a low tone, the renegade mounted and rode away through the wood.

Two days passed, and they heard nothing of him. Upon the afternoon of the third he came into camp accompanied by a pale, intellectual-looking man in the dress of a clergyman, who looked mildly about on the wild group in the camp, evidently surprised to find himself in such a place. He was at once conducted to one of the brush cabins which had been built up by the men, while Black Will dismounted and ordered that Melton and the other prisoners should be removed into the woods a short distance from the camp, for he knew the missionary too well to believe that he would perform the ceremony if he had any doubt of the willingness of the lady to do her part, and Black Will feared the prisoners might let him know the true state of the case.

Five men accompanied the prisoners into the woods, with orders to shoot them down at the first attempt to escape. When this was done Black Will approached the brush cabin in which Sadie spent the time, and called her out.

"I have returned," he said, cheerfully. "You must ex-

use me for staying away from you so long, but I found it difficult to find the missionary."

"I only wish you had never found him or had received your just deserts, sir," was the somewhat unpromising reply.

"My deserts; I deserve better treatment at your hands, I think."

"Twelve feet of rope and a tree would suit you better," she replied. "Do not deceive yourself by the belief that I shall ever change in my regard for you. The most slimy reptile which crawls through the swamp would be to me a more pleasant companion. I give my hand to you to save me friends, but never my heart with it."

He stood moodily before her, tapping his boot with the riding-whip he carried.

"I have half a mind to refuse your hand upon these terms," he said, gloomily, without raising his eyes from the earth upon which they were bent. Your language is horrible to one to whom you are about to join yourself for life, and the day will surely come when you will repent it bitterly. There, I will say no more now; but, in half an hour I shall come for you and we will be married."

"You need not fear but I will keep my word," she said.
"Will you keep yours as well?"

"I never broke it yet to friend or foe," was his answer, "and I no not mean to commence now. When you have given me your hand in marriage, these men shall have two days' grace, but if I catch them after that, woe be to them, that is all."

He turned upon his heel and left her to her own reflections, which were not of the most pleasant type. At times she doubted her firmness in the hour of trial, and whether she would not give way in the presence of the missionary, but the thought of his fearful threat against her lover and friends nerved her, and she determined to bear up as bravely as she could, and make the sacrifice for their safety. She would have liked to see Melton once before the ceremony, but feared that she was not strong enough to endure the meeting. While she sat there with her face buried in her hands, Black Will came for her.

"There is one favor I would ask you," she said, "and it is one you can easily grant. You know I love Charles Melton, but all thoughts of him must pass in the moment when I put my hand in yours. Under the circumstances he must not see me again, and I could not bear to see him."

"Agreed; you shall not see him, and if he dares to attempt an interview when you are once my wife, it will be the worse for him. I have removed him already, and they wait in the woods until the ceremony is over, when they shall be allowed to go where they will."

"That will do, sir. Now I am ready, if you will not relent."

He shook his head savagely, and taking her hand led her out into the open space among the trees. The band were standing carelessly about, looking on as the two took their station before the missionary, who advanced book in hand and stood before them.

He recited that portion of the ritual which was necessary before he asked the question, "and if any know just cause or reason why these should not be joined together in the bands of holy wedlock, let them now speak or forever after hold their peace," when the crowd scattered before the rush of a strong man, and the gigantic figure of the Forest Fiend sprung into the circle and hurled Black Will ten paces backward by a single thrust of his powerful arm, while he cried, fiercely:

"I forbid the banns!"

"Down with him," roared Black Will, drawing his knife
"At him, boys."

"Back!" cried the strange being, "back, for your lives. It is not right that innocence and youth should be forced to wed with such a thing as this, and I forbid it. Back, I say."

They recoiled before the stern figure, especially those among them who had felt the nervous force of his strong arm, while Black Will looked at the clergyman.

"Do not mind the ravings of a madman, sir," he said; "this man is insane and knows not what he does."

"It is false, reverend sir," replied the Forest Fiend. "I am as sane a man as any here, and know whereof I speak. Fall back, men; don't press upon me. Ha, they will have it, then. Melton's Scout to the rescue!"

As the tones of his sonorous voice rung out through the deep forest, there came a charging cheer, and the buck-skin shirts and coon-skin caps of Melton's Scout showed through the leafy cover, and with wild cries they poured upon the foe.

Not a shot was fired, for Sadie, the missionary and the Forest Fiend stood in the midst of the enemy, and the Scout dared not fire. But as the enemy retreated, snatching up their weapons as they went, at a signal from the Forest Fiend, Sadie and the missionary fell upon their faces, and the Scout poured in a single withering volley which strewed the ground with dead and dying, and then charged upon the foe with knife, hatchet and pistol.

The Forest Fiend caught up a rifle from the earth, and using it as a club, headed the charge. Close behind him came Charles Melton, Cooney Joe and Tom Bantry, striking out manfully for the right, and felling an adversary at every blow. But none could equal the strange being known as the Forest Fiend. Taking the ponderous rifle in one hand, he made it play about his head with lightning rapidity, and the renegades went down before him like chaff before the wind.

Taken by surprise, it was no wonder that the retreat soon became a rout, and they scattered to the four winds, closely pursued by their determined assailants. One man, and that man Dick Garrett, dared to bar the way of the Forest Fiend, who paused with uplifted weapon and looked at him.

"At last, villain," he cried, "your time has come!"

Vain was the interposition of the rifle of the renegade to stay the blow. It descended upon his head, and Dick Garrett, the friend and companion in villainy of Will Jackwood lay dead at the avenger's feet. At this moment a cry of anger was heard, and turning, the strange man saw that Jack wood was on horseback, headed for the bushes.

"Fire at him," he cried. "Bring him down at all hazards."

Half a dozen bullets sped, but Jackwood was already in the thicket, and all pursuit was vain. Five minutes later the fight was over, and few of Black Will's band remained to tell the tale of that terrible day.

The Forest Fiend turned back to the place where Sadie

stood, encircled by the arm of Charles Melton, and she drew closer to her lover as she marked his terrible aspect. Raising his hand to his face, he tore off the hairy mask which covered it, and revealed the face of—*Samuel Wescott!*

Her father, redeemed from a watery grave! In an instant Sadie was in his arms, half-delirious with joy, and the tried friends gathered about him, eager to shake his hand, while Cooney Joe and Tom Bantry danced a comic hornpipe, uttering yells which would have done credit to Sac warriors on the war-trail.

When the first transport of the meeting was over, Samuel Wescott turned to Tom Bantry and shook him warmly by the hand.

"You did your best to save me, my friend," he said; "but I knew that both must perish if I clung to you. I went down, as you know, and coming to the surface, in a death-struggle I caught a floating log, which quickly bore me down the stream, and I had not the strength to land until I had been carried two miles down. Near this place I had a *cache*, in which, among other articles, was this disguise, which I have sometimes worn in my expeditions among the tribes, and I knew that it might aid me in the work before me. Had I known that it would frighten my daughter so much, I would have shown my face when I attacked the men who guarded her, while you were fighting in the swamp."

"It's enough to skeer the life out of any critter," said Cooney Joe. "I don't wonder she run from you."

"It has served its purpose. I followed you to this place, Sadie, and having satisfied myself that those I loved were in no immediate danger, I went back for the Scout, the position of whose camp I knew. We came up softly, set Melton, Joe and Tom at liberty, and then attacked these scoundrels. The rest you know as well as I. There is only one thing for which I am sorry, and that is, that this villain Jackwood has escaped. But his fate will find him out."

Half an hour later they were on their way to the river, guarded by Melton's Scout. The last week had been one of trial, but they had come out of the flame triumphant, and the power of Black Will Jackwood was broken forever. As they reached the river-bank, and the men were bringing up the

flat in which they were to cross, Minneoba suddenly appeared from the forest, and fell upon Sadie's neck, weeping for joy.

"Minneoba can bear any thing now, the breaking of her people, the loss of home, for her sister is safe. Good-by, and do not forget the poor Indian girl who loves you."

"Come with us," said Samuel Wescott. "I will give you shelter in my house until the war is at an end."

But Minneoba shook her head sadly.

"No," she said. "The Indian girl must not leave her father, who loves her. Go in peace."

They parted from her sadly, and as the flat receded from the shore, they saw her standing in a dejected attitude, leaning on her bow. It was many a day before they saw her again.

The battle was at its height. Black-Hawk had risked all upon a cast of the die, and had found it a losing game. Melton, Cooney Joe and Tom Bantry were there, fighting gallantly, and as the Indians began to break up, they charged a resolute knot of warriors who stood their ground stubbornly, dealing death on every side.

There was a moment of wild confusion, and Charles Melton found himself face to face with a desperate man, in his war-paint, who assailed him with demoniac fury. Just then Melton's horse fell, shot through the heart, and his adversary sprung at him with a wild cry of joy, raising a hatchet above his devoted head.

"Death to you, Melton," he screamed. "I am Will Jackwood, and you die by my hand. If I lost her, at least you shall never possess her."

Melton, pinned to the earth by his fallen horse, lifted his hand to ward off the blow, but hampered as he was he could offer but slight resistance, and the knife, his only defense, was forced from his hand, and the hatchet gleamed above him.

He had just time to catch the gleam of ferocious joy in the eyes of his enemy, and had given up hope, when a rifle cracked, and Jackwood, throwing up his arms, clutched at the bloody cloth upon his breast, tried once more to lift his

weapon, and then, with a snarl of demoniac malice, dropped dead in his tracks, while Cooney Joe, with a rifle smoking in his hand, ran to aid his fallen leader, who was quickly placed upon his feet.

"Who is he?" cried Joe, angrily. "Ha! Black Will, by the mortal. Rubbed out at last."

This was his epitaph. He died as he had lived, boldly and defiantly, and found a soldier's grave.

The power of Black-Hawk was broken, and the old chief a fugitive, soon to be a prisoner in the hands of the whites. Then it was that Samuel Wescott kept his promise to Minneoba, and gave her a shelter under his roof. The teachings of Sadie soon changed the forest maiden so much, that she loved a domestic life, and when Sadie was married, soon after Black-Hawk's visit to the east, Minneoba was there, and witnessed the ceremony. When it was finished, Cooney Joe stopped the clergyman :

"Stop a little, stranger," he said, sheepishly. "Got another little job for you, I have."

And to the surprise of all, Minneoba took his hand, and they were married.

Unknown to every one, Joe had obtained the consent of the old chief, who knew that his daughter was better fitted to live with the whites than with the tribes, and Minneoba became the wife of Joe Bent. She never had cause to repent it. Rough though he was, he was a true man, and worked nobly for her sake, and strange as it may seem, became in time, one of the richest farmers in that region.

Captain Melton also settled there, and the two families were constantly together. And above the mantel, in Melton's study, hangs the costume of the Forest Fiend.

Tom Bantry was for years a successful boatman upon the Mississippi, and at last a Captain. Samuel Wescott died at a green old age, honored and beloved by all who knew him.

THE END.

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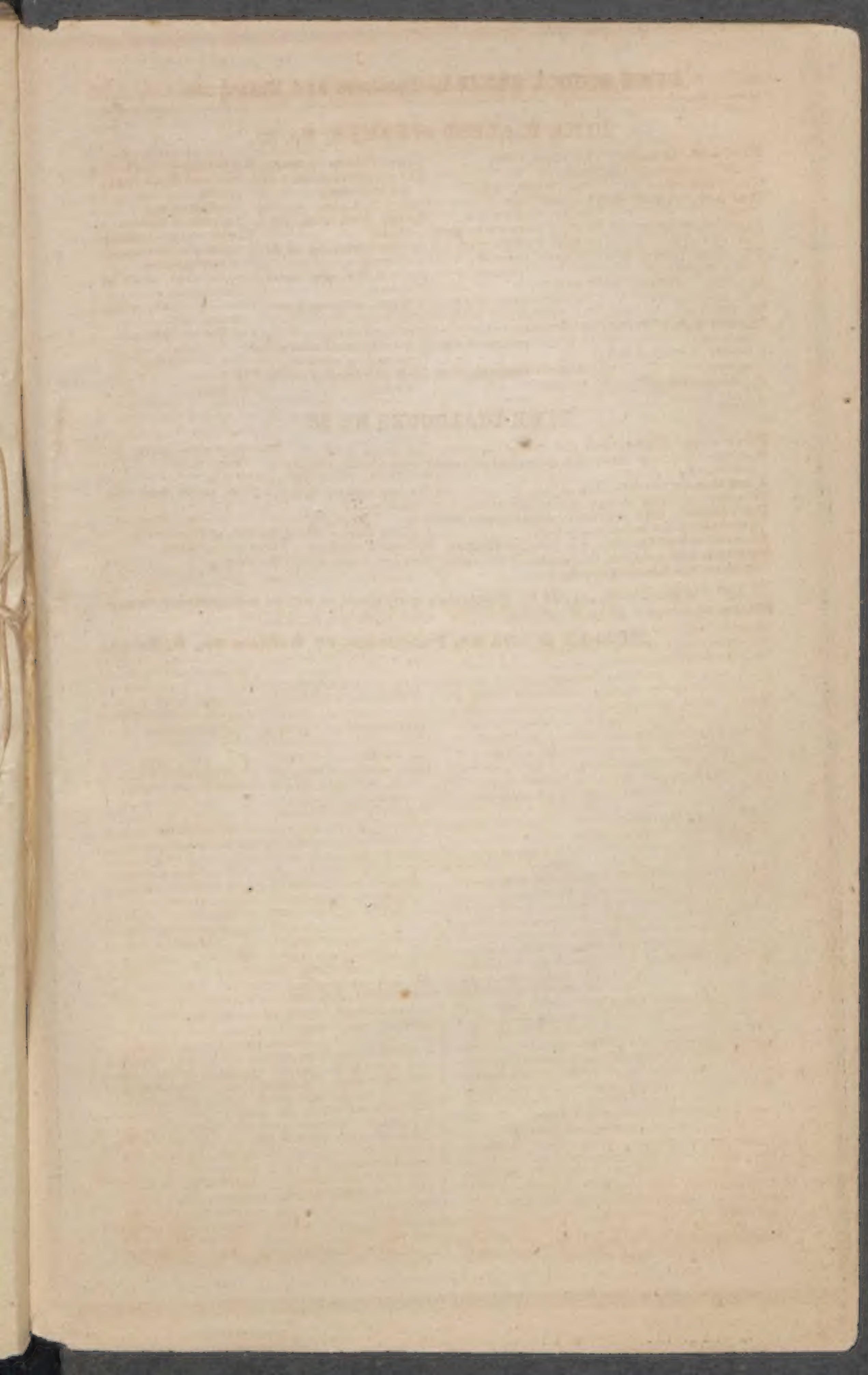
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